MAY 2008
$4.99

CAPITAL ENCOUNTER: THE PRESIDENT TAKES HOME A NEW UNI'

chopTalk

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE ATLANTA BRAVES

CATCH A RISING STAR

A LOOK AT HOW McCANN'S BAT IS PROPELLING HIM TO GREATNESS

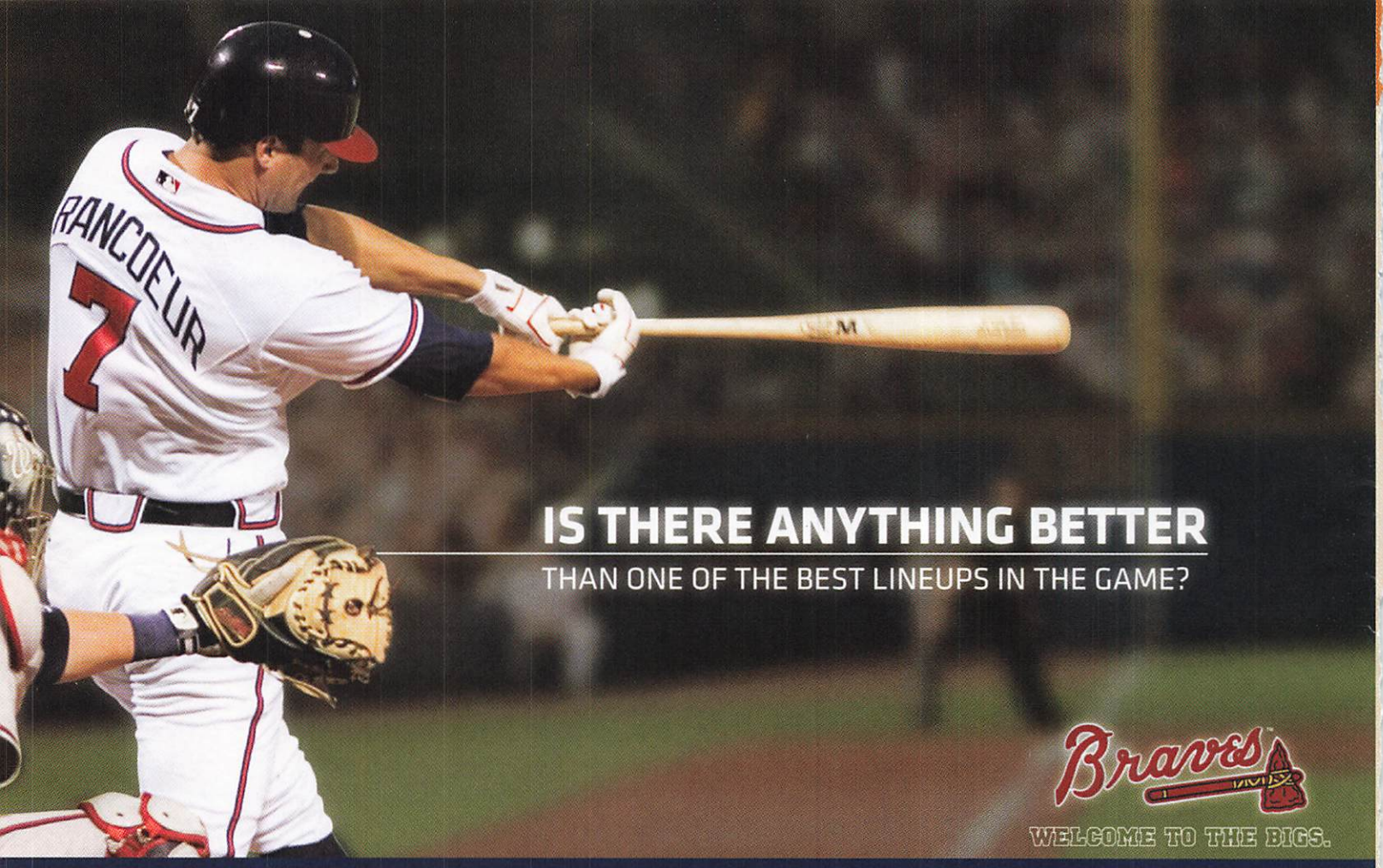
PLUS

- THE LEGEND OF NO. 6
- A LESSON IN CLOSER EVOLUTION
- KIDS' EYE VIEW OF TURNER FIELD

... AND MUCH MORE!

ACE OF QUOTES

Q&A WITH TIM HUDSON



IS THERE ANYTHING BETTER

THAN ONE OF THE BEST LINEUPS IN THE GAME?

Braves

WELCOME TO THE BIGS.

BRAVES MAY LINEUP

MAY 2 — CINCINNATI — FRIDAY 7:30 PM **Publix Friday Night Fireworks** 7:30 PM	**MAY 3** — CINCINNATI — SATURDAY 7:00PM **College and Military Discounts** 7:00 PM — 2-for-1 tickets with student or service I.D.	**MAY 4** — CINCINNATI — SUNDAY 1:30 PM **All-Star Sunday** 1:30PM — Kids get to take the field after the last out
MAY 6 — SAN DIEGO — TUESDAY 7:00 PM **Coca-Cola 2-for-1 Tuesday** 7:00 PM — Buy One Get One FREE tickets	**MAY 7** — SAN DIEGO — WEDNESDAY 7:00 PM **Braves Visor Night** 7:00 PM — Presented by NAPA for the first 10,000 fans	**MAY 8** — SAN DIEGO — THURSDAY 1:00 PM **Braves Field Day** 1:00 PM — Participate in field day activities you enjoyed as a kid
MAY 16 — OAKLAND — FRIDAY 7:30 PM **Publix Friday Night Fireworks** 7:30PM	**MAY 17** — OAKLAND — SATURDAY 7:00 PM **All-You-Can-Eat Seats** 7:00 PM — As low as $30	**MAY 18** — OAKLAND — SUNDAY 1:30 PM **Bark in the Park** 1:30 PM — Presented by the Braves and Wag-A-Lot
MAY 20 — NEW YORK — TUESDAY 7:00 PM **Coca-Cola 2-for-1 Tuesday** 7:00 PM — Buy One Get One FREE tickets	**MAY 21** — NEW YORK — WEDNESDAY 7:00 PM **Mark Teixeira Bobblehead Night** 7:00 PM — Presented by Coca-Cola to the first 15,000 fans	**MAY 22** — NEW YORK — THURSDAY 7:00 PM **Braves Carry-On Bag Night** Presented by Delta to the first 45,000 fans 7:00 PM **Asian Heritage Night**
MAY 23 — ARIZONA — FRIDAY 7:30 PM **Publix Friday Night Fireworks** 7:30 PM	**MAY 24** — ARIZONA — SATURDAY 3:55 PM **All-You-Can-Eat Seats** 3:55 PM — As low as $30	**MAY 25** — ARIZONA — SUNDAY 1:30 PM **All-Star Sunday** 1:30PM — Kids get to take the field after the last out
MAY 26 — ARIZONA — MONDAY 1:00 PM **Memorial Day Celebration** 1:00 PM		

© 2008, Atlanta National League Baseball Club, Inc. All rights reserved. ™ The Braves script and tomahawk are trademarks of the Atlanta National League Baseball Club, Inc. All rights reserved.

1.800.326.4000 **braves.com/tickets**

BATTING ORDER

MAY 2008

POWER HITTERS

6-8
KIDS' EYE VIEW
Two Young Fans Discover A Veritable Wonderland Of Treasures... And Baseball, Too By Jay Busbee

9
PLAY BALL!
Javy's Pitch And More Scenes From Opening Night At Turner Field

18-19
SINGING FOR THEIR TICKETS
Fans Reach For The High Note In Idol-Style Competition By Martha Payne

24-25
GOT PEACHTREE?
In The Nick Of Time, Most Fans Find They Can Watch the "45 Missing Games" By Carol Carter

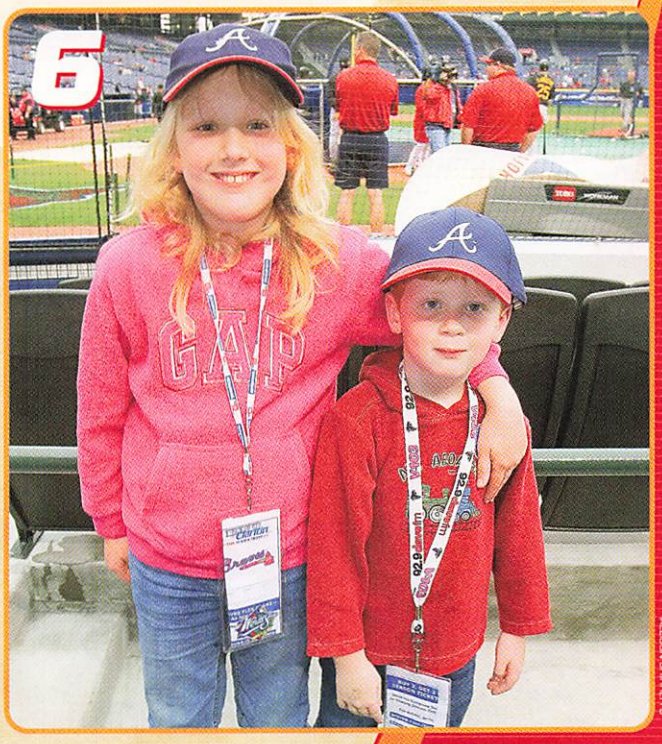
26-27
PLAYING PEPPER
Tim Hudson Reflects On Pitching, Aging And The Task At Hand By Patty Rasmussen

28-31
RARE TALENT
Examining The Route McCann Is Following In Pursuit Of Greatness By Jon Cooper

36-38
NO SMALL CHANGE
If The Roster Looks A Bit Different, That's Because It Is - 60 Percent Different By Patty Rasmussen

40-42
CAPITAL ENCOUNTER
Presidential Visit, New Stadium, Blue Uniforms Make For Unique Season Opener By Melanie D.G. Kaplan

43
LEGEND OF NO. 6
No Matter How Many Games Cox Wins, His Legacy Will Be A Passion For The Game By Hal Bodley of MLB.com



ALLISON SHEERTS

PAUL ABELL

ATLANTA BRAVES

BRIAN McCANN
by Paul Abell

Jeff Francoeur, President George W. Bush and Chipper Jones
by Mitchell Layton

Tim Hudson
by Carlos Restrepo

Design by Clark Odom

BATTING ORDER

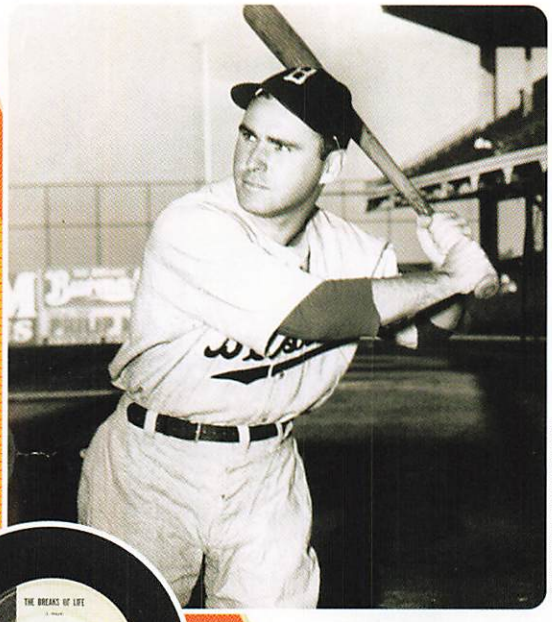
MAY 2008

SINGLES HITTERS

12-13 SCOREBOARD
16-17 BUNTS & BASEHITS
20-21 OFF THE FIELD
39 BEHIND THE NUMBERS By Steve Fall
54-55 HEROES & HISTORY
Bob Watson's Dual Accomplishments As a Player/Executive May Be Unmatched
By Brian Knapp
56 ALUMNI NOTES
58-59 BEYOND BASEBALL By Patty Rasmussen
60-61 TALKIN' CHOP
62 XTRA INNINGS

PITCHERS

11 PAINTING THE CORNERS By Jay Busbee
15 SKIP CARAY
17 FRANK WREN
21 BOBBY COX
31 BATTER UP! By Ruben Gotay
38 AROUND BASEBALL
By Ken Rosenthal of FoxSports.com
57 GARY CARUSO
61 JOHNNY SAJEM'S Cartoon

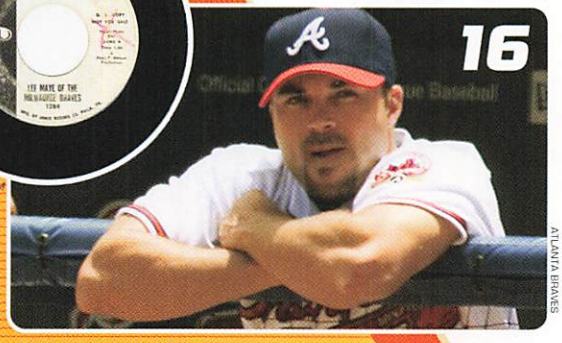


NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME

57

ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME & MUSEUM

12



ATLANTA BRAVES

PINCH-HITTERS

25 PEACHTREE TV NETWORK
48-49 2008 SCHEDULE CALENDAR/TV LISTINGS
50-51 TICKETS, TURNER FIELD INFO
52 FINAL SPRING TRAINING STATS
53 INDIVIDUAL STATS
GAME BY GAME
55 HOW I MADE IT TO THE MAJORS
By Steve Fall
62 BIRTHDAYS

ON DECK

44-46 FARM SYSTEM ROUNDUP By Bill Ballew
45 LEGENDS OF THE MINORS By Bill Ballew
46 DOWN ON THE FARM By Brandon Hicks
47 OPENING DAY FARM ROSTERS

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 5

CHOPTALK USPS Periodicals Publication 022-732; ISSN 1555-1547 is published monthly for $37.95 per year ($56.95 Canada and Mexico; $76.95 other international; payment in U.S. dollars only) by Wonderdog Publishing, Inc.

Copyright 2008 with all rights reserved. Reproduction or use, without permission, of any content, in whole or part - in any manner - is prohibited.

Office of publication is located at 12829 Trinity Dr., Stafford, Tex. 77477-4214. Visit Braves.com. E-mail Letters@ChopTalkonline.com. This is the Official Monthly Magazine of the Atlanta Braves. Single copy price is $4.99. Periodical postage paid at Stafford, Tex., and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes and returns to: ChopTalk, P.O. Box 80750, Conyers, Ga. 30013-8750.

GET YOUR ATLANTA BRAVES GIFT CARDS TODAY

$25 AND $50 GIFT CARDS GOOD FOR TICKETS, CONCESSIONS AND MERCHANDISE

Braves™

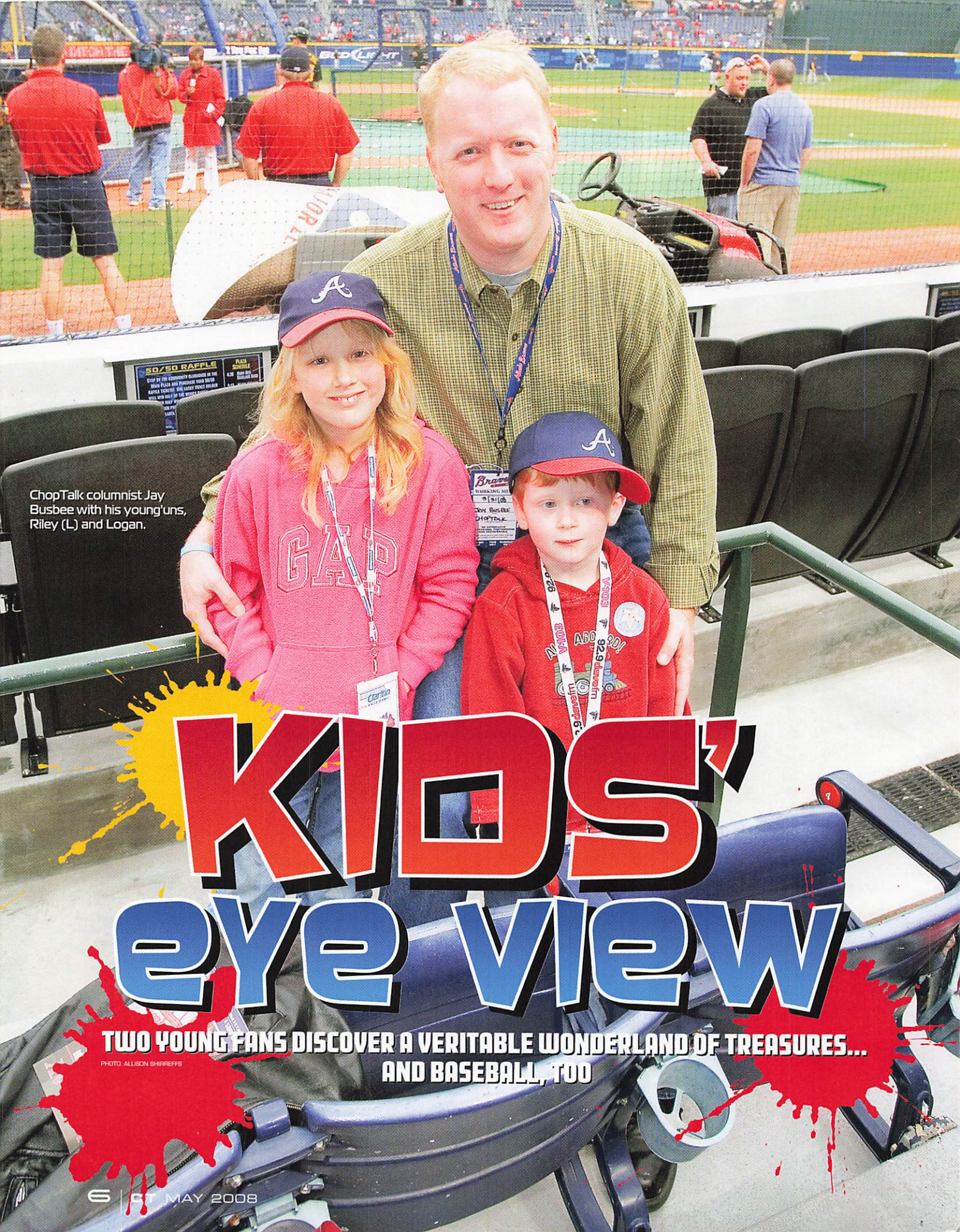
Gift Cards are perfect for birthdays, holidays, special occasions, employee incentives and everyday thank-yous.

Available now at:

- **braves.com/tickets**
- Braves Clubhouse Store at CNN Center
- Braves Clubhouse Collection Catalog at 800.433.BRAVES
- Merchandise locations on the Golden Moon Casino Level
- Turner Field Clubhouse Store located in the fan plaza
- Publix Supermarkets

Multi-Game Ticket Packages as low as $44. For more information call 404.577.9100 or visit **braves.com/tickets**

© 2008, Atlanta National League Baseball Club, Inc. All rights reserved. ™ The Braves script and tomahawk are trademarks of the Atlanta National League Baseball Club, Inc. All rights reserved.



ChopTalk columnist Jay Busbee with his young'uns, Riley (L) and Logan.

KIDS' eye view

TWO YOUNG FANS DISCOVER A VERITABLE WONDERLAND OF TREASURES... AND BASEBALL, TOO

PHOTO: ALLISON SHIRREFFS

BY JAY BUSBEE

FOR MANY YEARS, I've attended Braves games one of two ways - as reporter or as fan. When I'm in reporting mode, I stay in the press box and keep my cheering to a minimum, discreetly pumping a fist or rolling my eyes. When I'm a fan, I'm much more vocal, throwing out chants, taunts and one-liners for almost every batter. (Yeah, I'm one of those guys.)

Even though I'm watching the game in two very different ways, I'm still watching the game. That's an important point, as I learned recently when I attended a game a third way - as the parent of two extremely active kids.

To set the stage: For the Braves' home opener Mar. 31, I took my daughter Riley (age 8) and son Logan (age 5) to Turner Field. My mission was to view the game through the eyes of a child. And I came away with some very important lessons about how to watch the game with kids. To wit:

The on-field action ranks about sixth or seventh in importance for a kid, behind gift shopping, fireworks, tattoos, and pretty much everything else.

At ballgames, kids are always trying to figure out what they'll eat next, even when they've got the previous snack still in their mouths.

However much cash you think you'll need, double it. I think I paid for at least one homestand's worth of Mark Teixeira for next year.

Then again, as you'll see, I was doing research. Your expenditures may vary.

So, with a deep breath and a reminder that I can always check online after the game to see what happened, I piled the kids in the car and set out. And it all unfurled this way:

5:15: Stuck in traffic en route to the ballgame, I tell Riley to finish her homework. Yeah, right. I'd have better success at hitting a Smoltz fastball.

5:30: I lecture the kids that we'll be eating dinner and getting one treat, and that's it. They won't be getting snacks every five minutes.

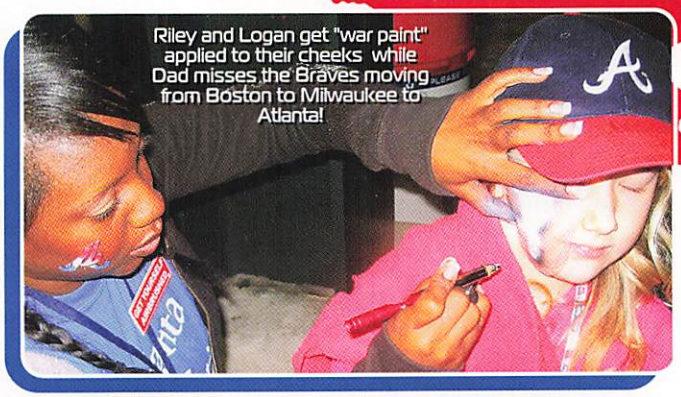
5:32: It'll be every two minutes. As we pull into the parking lot, the attendant is giving away boxes full of Moon Pies. Resistance, as they say, is futile.

5:40: We meet Allison Shirreffs, the ChopTalk photographer, who snaps a couple of shots of the young'uns right down by the field. Afterward, Logan plops down in one of the comfy green padded SunTrust Section seats - and immediately becomes the first person in Turner Field history to be kicked out of said section.

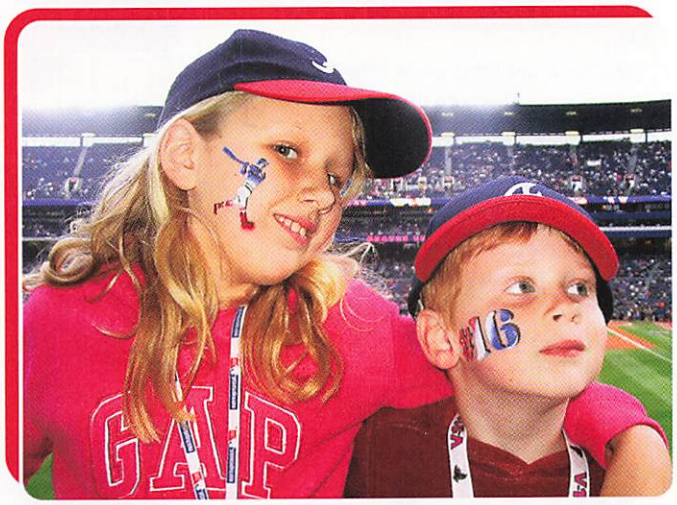
6:03: The kids are hungry - those Moon Pies didn't last long - so we make our way over to the Plaza for dinner. Dad's pushing for Skip & Pete's, but the kids want nachos. They realized early that they're in charge tonight, and they're showing neither mercy nor restraint.

6:22: Riley decides she wants a face tattoo. I protest that they're about to show the video documenting the history of the Braves franchise.

6:23: We're in the Scout's Alley tattoo line.



Riley and Logan get "war paint" applied to their cheeks while Dad misses the Braves moving from Boston to Milwaukee to Atlanta!



PHOTOS: JAY BUSBEE

6:30: While I wait in line, Logan and Riley try to jump and match Otis Nixon's "Catch". After nearly knocking their teeth out leaping into the wall, they decide to stop. Out on the field, the video has begun.

6:35: In the course of the video, the Braves have moved from Boston to Milwaukee to Atlanta, and we're still in the tattoo line.

6:38: Sid slides, and we're still in the tattoo line.

6:40: Fourteen division titles, and we're still in the tattoo line. Apparently the kids ahead of us are getting The Last Supper painted on their cheeks or something.

6:45: Finally, Riley has her tattoo, and Logan joins her, getting branded with the #16 of his favorite player, Brian McCann. We head to our seats to watch the last of the opening ceremonies.

6:50: The players are announced, one by one. Logan goes nuts for McCann, and Riley shrieks as her favorite, Jeff Francoeur, waves to the fans.

6:55: Atlanta's own American Idol finalist, Diana DeGarmo, begins the national anthem. I tell the kids to get set for the awesome F-18 flyover.

6:57: Diana hits "hooooooome of the braaaaaave," and no sign of the jets. Either somebody missed a cue, we're sitting in

completely the wrong seats, or the cloud cover's too low. No planes that I can see. I turn to break the news to the kids...

6:58: ...And end up following them as they chase a cotton candy guy across three sections to get some blue cotton candy. I sense a theme developing here.

7:05: The crowd roars as the P.A. announcer welcomes Javy Lopez to throw out the first ball. "Who?" Riley asks. Ouch.

7:10: I tell the kids to chill out for a moment to watch Tom Glavine's first pitch. Why?

Because until this night, my son has never known a world where Tom Glavine wasn't a Met.

7:11: And with the first pitch gone, it's off to Tooner Field. If you haven't been to Tooner Field, the playhouse decorated with Cartoon Network characters, here's how to replicate the experience: Eat an entire can of cake icing, then watch kids' cartoons from foreign countries with your face an inch from the screen. I thought I was fairly kid-TV-savvy, but I have no idea what half these shows are. Which I guess is the point.

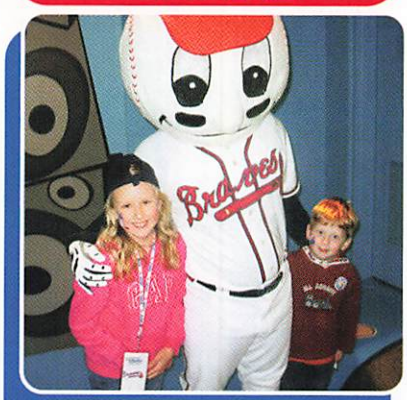
7:15: But wait! The Braves have thought of parents who are baseball fans! Scattered throughout Tooner Field are TVs with the ballgame on, so you can keep up with the game while keeping half an eye on your kids! It's flawless!

7:45: And it's a good thing the TVs are there, because the kids spend an inning and a half roaming through the playgrounds, popping in and out of mysterious doors, smacking a foam baseball all over the mock baseball field out back, and giggling the entire time. Whatever adults think of the flash-and-dazzle of Tooner Field, the kids love it. Which, again, is the point.

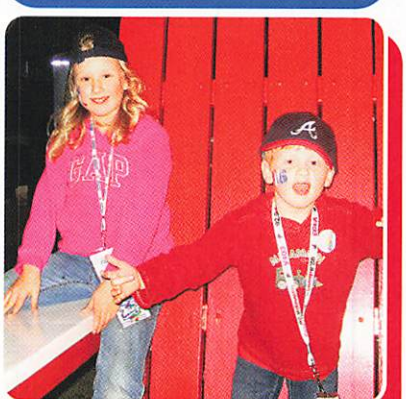
7:50: Time for some ice cream of the future! The kids want Dippin' Dots out at Fan Plaza, and what the kids want, Dad's providing. This time. Next game, it's going to be a rude awakening.

8:05: So what better place to take a couple of tattooed, sugar-jacked kids than a museum? We walk past the Braves Museum en route to Sky Field, and I try to entice them inside to give them a little Braves learnin'. They waver, until I offer the kicker: "There's a train..." Sold.

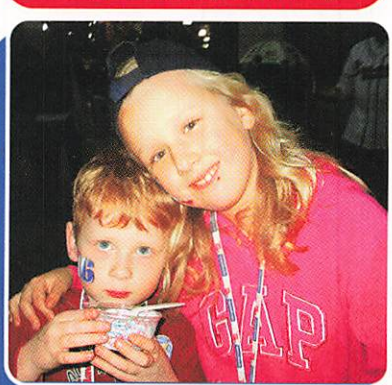
This is how Otis did it!



Meeting a new friend.



In a big chair up high at Sky Field.



Wait 'til Mom hears what we had to eat!

PHOTOS: JAY BUSBEE

8:15: We wander throughout the museum. Logan loves the old train car that carried Braves teams of yore. Riley can't believe how beat-up the old Braves bench from Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium is. I decide not to tell her about the tobacco juice stains that must have been removed with the kind of chemicals they use to clean battleships.

8:20: Up, and up, and up we go to Sky Field, one of the kids' favorite stops. They'll run those bases like they were playing St. Louis in the '96 NLCS. (Braves fans, you know what I'm talking about. The kids just give me blank stares.)

8:25: While we're up there, I steal a chance to look out over the field. McCann steps to the plate. I put Logan on my shoulders, and - man, I couldn't have ordered this if I tried - McCann sends a shot into the right-center stands. And just behind us, the Coke bottle sends fireworks into the sky right over our heads. It's official: A Braves game is the coolest place on earth to take kids, and by association, I am the coolest dad on earth.

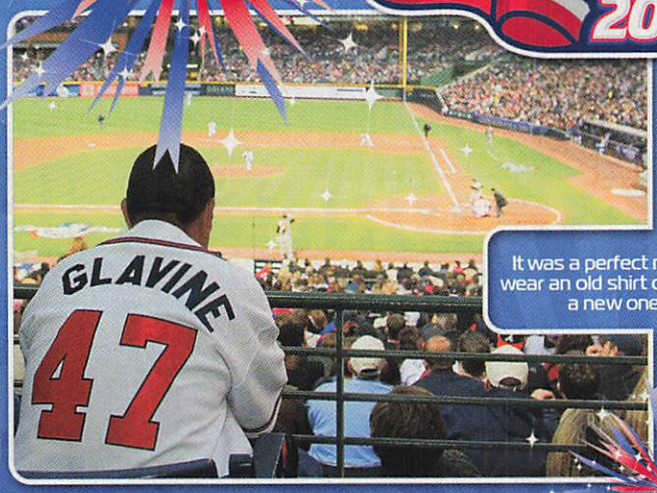
8:40-9:35: With a bribe of frozen lemonade - oh, man, their mom is going to kill me when we get home tonight - I get the kids to sit still for a couple of innings and try to explain the nuances of the game to them. Riley counts down the batters until Francoeur is up again. Logan becomes obsessed with the idea that the pitcher could hit someone with the ball, and tries to figure every possible angle. "What if he hits his own guy?" "What if he hits the umpire?" "What if he hits us?" The kid's looking like managerial material to me.

9:40: The game's headed for the eighth inning. The old fan's credo rears up in my head - you never leave a game early, never- but the father in me decides to pull rank. The kids have school tomorrow - and, as it turns out, the game would go 12 innings and last until nearly midnight. Score one for Dad.

10:20: We arrive home. The kids were asleep before we were out of sight of the Turner Field lights. It would make the perfect ending to this story if, as we were tucking them in, they said in bleary voices, "Dad, that was a great game. Can we go back tomorrow?" Instead, all they said was, "Uuuuhhhhhhlll'm sleeeeepy..." But I know what they meant.

And yes, we'll be back. We won't be buying snacks every inning, but we'll be back.

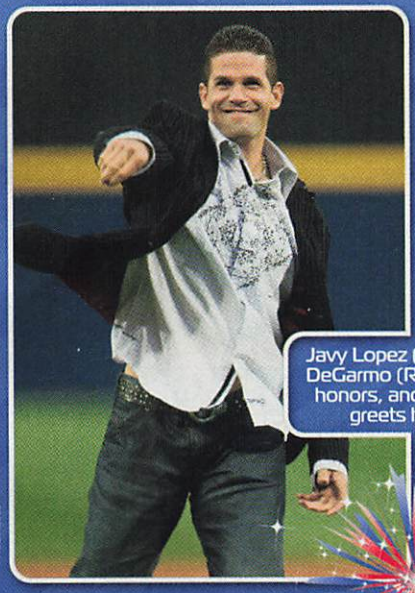
Opening Day 2008



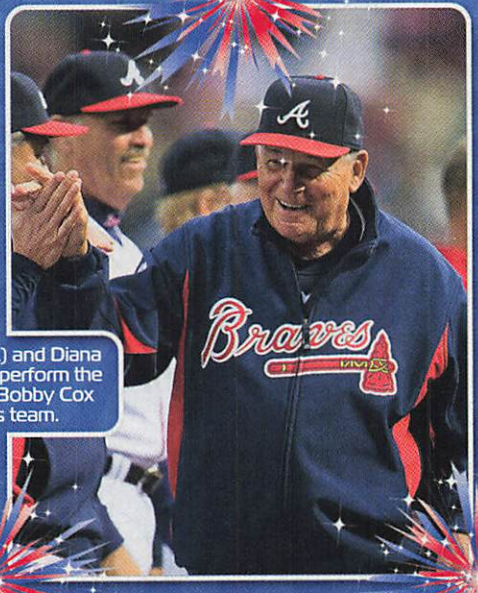
ALLISON SHERRETTS

It was a perfect night to wear an old shirt or to buy a new one.

ALLISON SHERRETTS



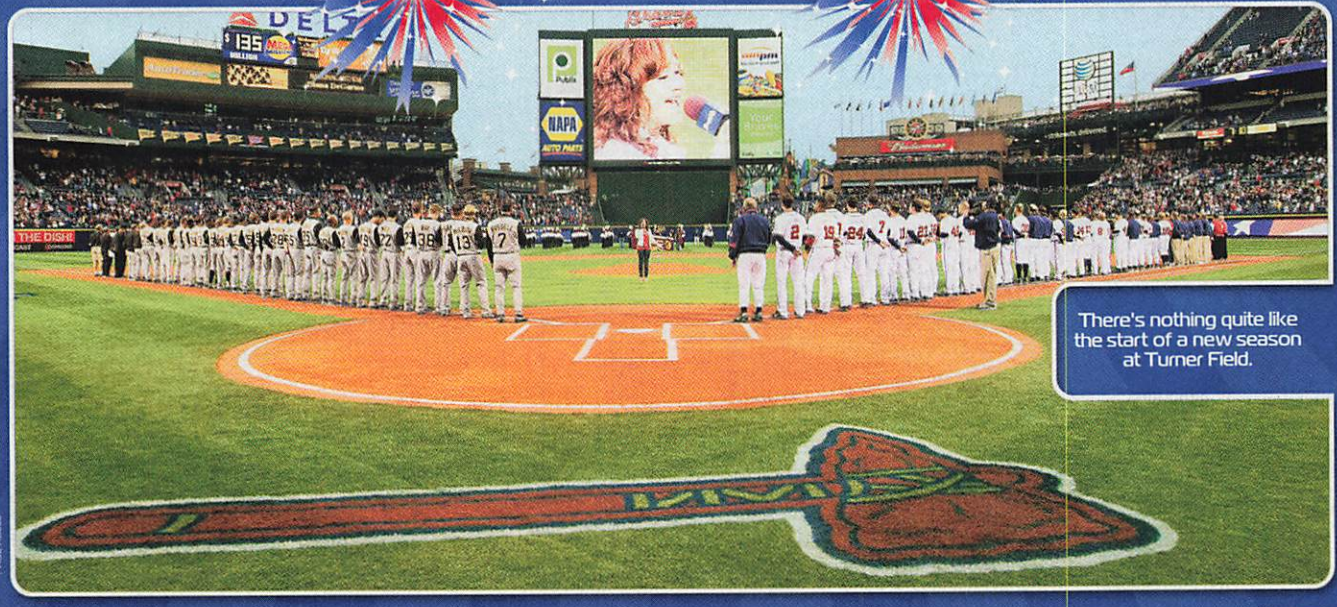
PAUL ABELL



PAUL ABELL

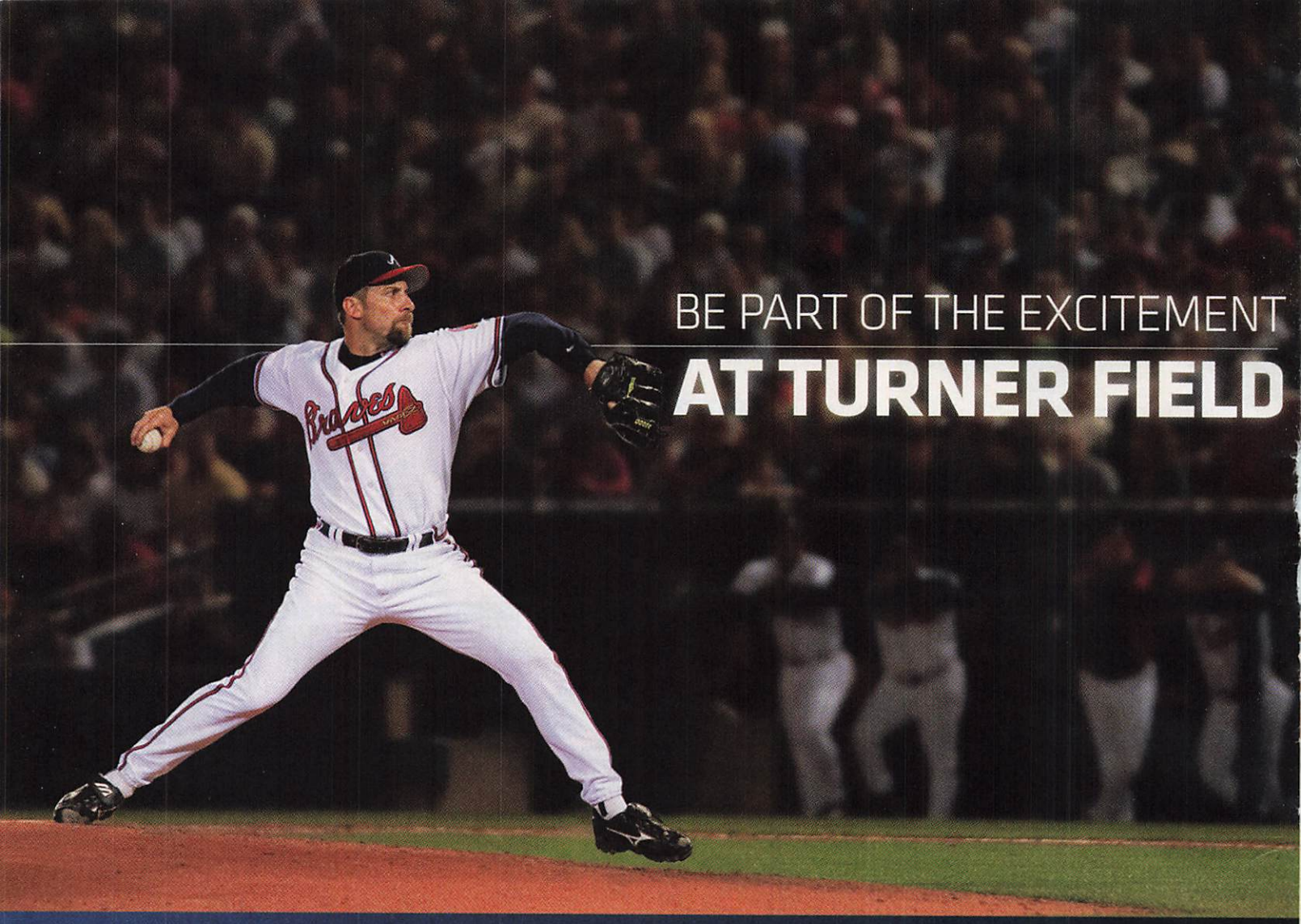
PAUL ABELL

Javy Lopez (L) and Diana DeGarmo (R) perform the honors, and Bobby Cox greets his team.



PAUL ABELL

There's nothing quite like the start of a new season at Turner Field.

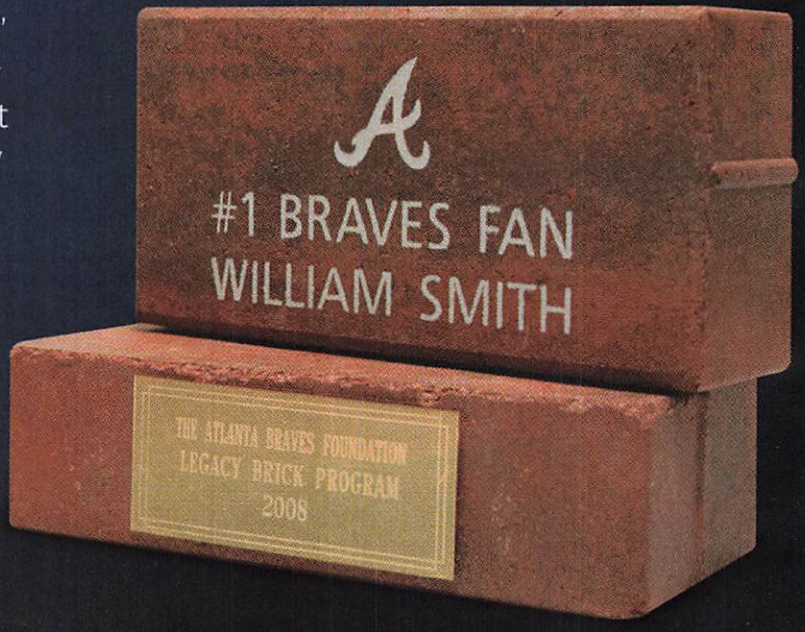


BE PART OF THE EXCITEMENT

AT TURNER FIELD

BRICK PAVERS MAKE GREAT GIFTS FOR BIRTHDAYS, HOLIDAYS, SPECIAL OCCASIONS, TEAM EVENTS AND SPECIAL DEDICATIONS.

Help your favorite fans become a part of Braves' history. Give them the chance to create a legacy with a custom-inscribed brick paver displayed at Turner Field. Each gift includes a complimentary replica brick for personal display.



Braves™

WELCOME TO THE BIGS.

Buy your Brick Paver today. Call 1.877.ABF.BRIX for gift cards or visit **braves.com/bricks**

PAINTING THE CORNERS

BY JAY BUSBEE

SORIANO'S TASK: CHANGE HISTORY'S COURSE

THERE'S AN OLD SAYING about closers: They always flame out one game too soon.

Okay, it's not that old of a saying. Matter of fact, I just made it up. But it works, doesn't it?

With rare exceptions like Mariano Rivera and Trevor Hoffman, closers seem to have the shelf life of former American Idol contestants. Just at the moment you start to expect consistent greatness from them, they give up a run here, blow a save there, and before long, they're on the trading block or out of the game.

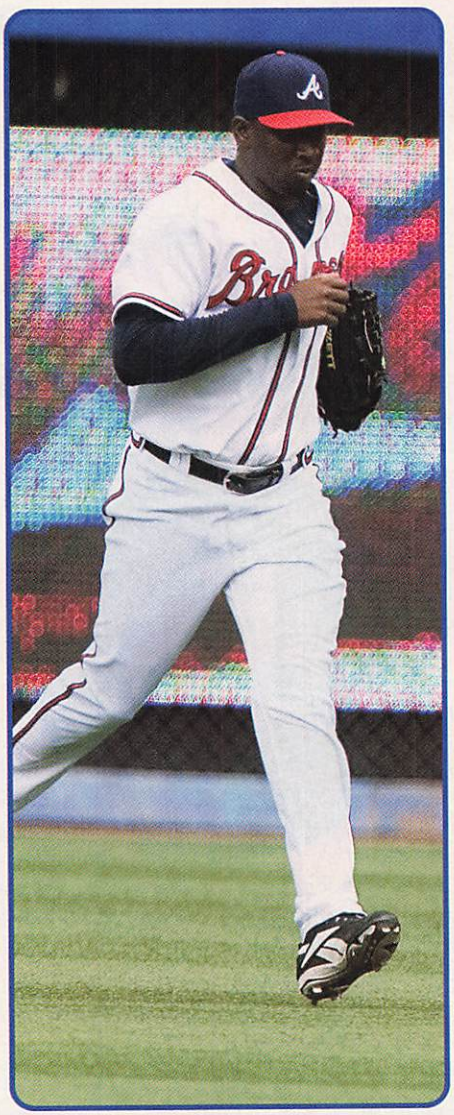
I can't prove it, but I'd bet that bullpen pitchers are responsible for more self-inflicted injuries - fists punched into walls, heads bashed on tabletops - than all other athletes combined. They're baseball's equivalent of an NFL kicker, their hours of waiting punctuated by moments of razor's-edge stress.

It's no wonder that most closers flame out in just a few seasons. You've got to have Tiger Woods-level willpower to carry the game on your shoulders every time you step on the mound.

The Braves' starting pitching is the stuff of legend. The bullpen, less so. The lack of a shutdown closer hurt Atlanta in its first two World Series trips in 1991 and '92. The failures of more-established closers set up playoff fades in later years, bottoming out with Mark Wohlers' unfortunate hanging slider to the Yankees' Jim Leyritz in the 1996 World Series.

What gets lost in these dramatic failures is the fact that the Braves wouldn't have reached post-season heights in the first place without strong bullpen performances. But in baseball, it's not the journey, it's the final destination.

For many years, Atlanta's bullpen worked like a family business. You showed up young, proved yourself in the middle innings, and eventually took over the coveted closer's role. It worked that way for Mike Stanton, Greg McMichael, Mark Wohlers, Kerry Ligtenberg and John Rocker, all of whom were either drafted by the Braves or arrived in the organization with little or no major league experience. They threw in widely varying styles, from craftiness to bulldog ferocity, but they all shared something in common - only about two to three years of true, league-dominating effectiveness.



ATLANTA BRAVES

An early season trip to the disabled list with elbow tendinitis interrupted Soriano's mission.

Then came John Smoltz, who screwed up everything for closers everywhere. Smoltz, an All-Star starter, switched to the bullpen following the Tommy John surgery that cost him the entire 2000 season, and threw like he was born to be a ninth-inning shutdown specialist.

In just three-plus seasons, he racked up 154 saves, breaking the National League record in 2002 with 55 and setting a Braves career record. (The fact that Smoltz reached that record so quickly also speaks volumes about the Braves' troubles in finding and keeping a decent long-term closer.)

Since Smoltz decided he liked pitching more than a single inning per game - and ached to have the ball in his hands for long stretches in the playoffs - the Braves have taken to importing closer talent. In the previous three seasons, Atlanta's revolving bullpen door produced closers such as Dan Kolb, Chris Reitsma and Bob Wickman, all of whom arrived in Atlanta via trade. Remarkably none are in the majors at this writing.

Kolb was, to put it charitably, a disappointment during his one season in Atlanta. Projected as the heir to Smoltz's closer legacy, Kolb, a former All-Star, completely flamed out. He lost the job two months into the season, mounting up four losses and three blown saves in less than 17 innings.

Reitsma was - and remains - injury plagued.

Wickman looked like a beer-league softball slugger but pitched like a Hall of Famer - for half a season, at least. Arriving in Atlanta in July 2006, he amassed 18 saves and a 1.04 ERA in 28 games.

But things went south in a hurry last year. In August, the Braves cut Wickman, in part because of ineffectiveness - he blew six saves in 26 opportunities - and in part, some Braves hinted, because Wickman had become more difficult in the clubhouse and griped about throwing in non-save situations.

So now we have Rafael Soriano, who also arrived via trade and can throw a fastball through a brick wall, always a desirable commodity in a closer. Of course, for about six weeks last summer, he had an unfortunate tendency to serve too many home runs. But let's hope he's got that particular tic under control.

If not, there's always Mike Gonzalez - a 24-game saver in 2006 - waiting in the rehab wings with a personal streak of 30 straight save conversions.

I'd love to say that Soriano's the answer, but he'll have to disprove recent history. Still, if he can manage saves in the final games of the season - and if those games come in late October - we'll worry about 2009 when it gets here.

ROCK ON!

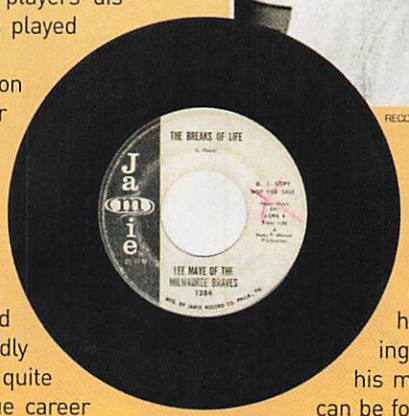
THE BRAVES have a new Hall of Famer... sort of.

A new exhibit titled "Take Me Out: Baseball Rocks!" opened at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame & Museum in Cleveland, Ohio, on April 26. The exhibit celebrates baseball as a pop-culture phenomenon with displays of sheet music, records, memorabilia and film associated with the game. Rock and roll references to baseball in songs such as Chuck Berry's "Brown Eyed Handsome Man," Simon and Garfunkel's "Mrs. Robinson," and John Fogerty's "Centerfield" are featured, as well as filmed interviews with modern players discussing why they chose particular songs played when they walk to the plate.

And in the middle of it all will be a collection of artifacts representing the unique career of a very talented, though not particularly well-known Braves outfielder named Lee Maye, who led the National League in doubles with 44 in 1964. He also enjoyed a successful career as an R&B and doo-wop singer in the mid-1950s and early 1960s.

Maye's baseball and vocal careers evolved at the same time, which almost undoubtedly cut into the success of both. Yet he still did quite well at both. He had a 13-year big league career from 1959-71 and was with the Milwaukee Braves for the first seven of those seasons. His best year was 1964 when he batted .304 and had 10 home runs and 74 RBIs to go with the 44 doubles. He had a lifetime .274 average with 94 home runs.

NATIONAL BASEBALL HALL OF FAME



RECORD: ROCK AND ROLL HALL OF FAME & MUSEUM

Maye, who was born in Tuscaloosa, Ala., but moved to Los Angeles when he was young, began his recording career in 1954 when he was still in the Braves' farm system. He performed primarily with a group called The Crowns, and though they never had a national hit, they had local hits including "Truly" and "Love Me Always." More about his music career, including a list of his songs, can be found at vocalgroupharmony.com/lee_maye where his songs can be heard and even downloaded.

Maye, who often recorded as Arthur Lee Maye, died in 2002 at age 67 but left behind quite a legacy.

- GARY CARUSO

BALLS OF FAME

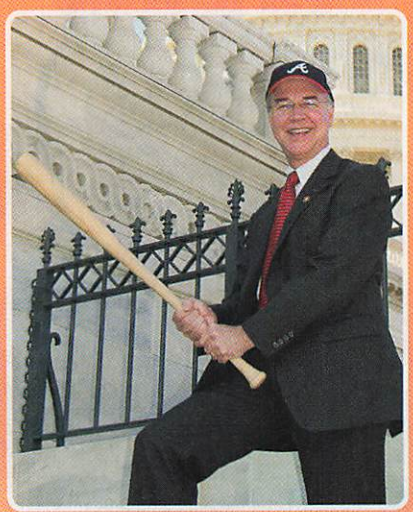
BRAVES FANS near Jacksonville, Fla., might want to take in some Jacksonville Suns (Dodgers' Double A) games this season. At every Monday and Wednesday night game (10 in all), the Suns will give away photo baseballs (first 1,000) celebrating five players who played in Jacksonville en route to induction in the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

Jacksonville used to be a Braves farm club, and three of the five featured players

- Hank Aaron, Phil Niekro and Hoyt Wilhelm - played for the Braves. The other two Hall of Famers are Tom Seaver and Nolan Ryan.

Seaver was an "almost Brave." The franchise drafted him out of Southern Cal in 1966 and signed him, but the contract was voided by the commissioner's office when it was discovered that Seaver signed after Southern Cal began its season with a game the Braves didn't know about

ON THE HILL



GEORGIA Congressman Tom Price (above) has been a loyal Braves fan since he moved to Atlanta in 1979 at age 25 and bought tickets to his first game. But it wasn't until 2005 that his baseball dream came true.

That year, Price played in the Congressional baseball game, held every spring in Washington between Democrats and Republicans.

"I got up there my first year in Congress and wore a Braves uniform with the number 6 - for my district and also the number of my childhood hero (Detroit Tigers Hall of Famer Al Kaline)," Price said.

The game was played at RFK Stadium, just east of the Capitol, and Price said playing a real game on a real big league field was remarkable.

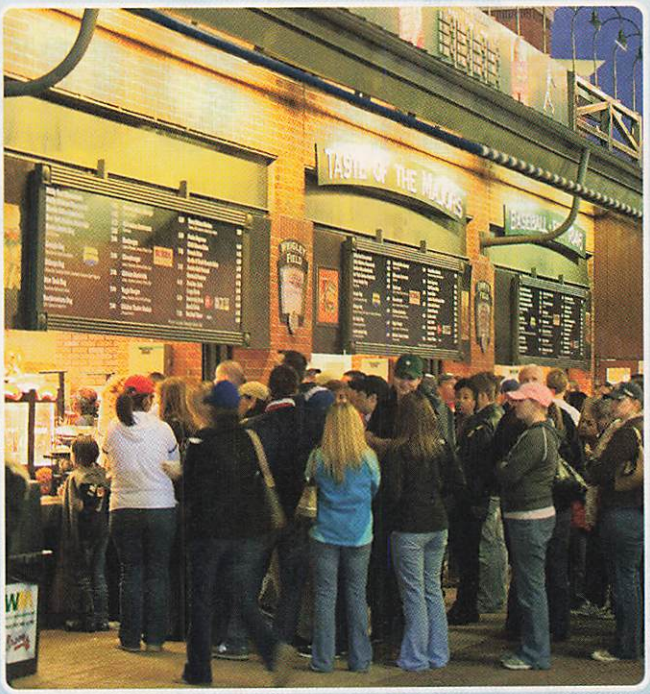
Price bought his first Braves season tickets in 1985 and has held them ever since. Before coming to Congress, Price was medical director of the Orthopaedic Clinic at Grady Memorial Hospital in Atlanta and served four terms in the Georgia State Senate. In his orthopedic practice, he treated some children of Braves players, and Price said he's gotten to know a couple of the players through community activities.

In 2005, Price went to the floor of the House of Representatives to give a speech when the Braves won their 14th straight division title. In his office on Capitol Hill, he always has a Braves cap.

- MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN

HOW DO THEY DO THAT?

KEEP THE KITCHEN STOCKED



DURING LAST SEASON'S home opener, Braves fans ate 13,000 hotdogs, 3,500 bags of peanuts and 600 bags of Cracker Jack. No matter how large the Turner Field crowd and its appetite, Aramark never runs out of any type of food or beverage. How do they know how much to order?

"We use our history from prior years," said Ron Ranieri, general manager for Aramark Sports and Entertainment at Turner Field. "For example, when the New York Mets come to town, we know from our history that this will be a large volume game. So we use our prior year information that we store at Turner Field. By doing that, we're able to project the quantities, and then get those out to our vendors."

Warehouse director Ron Linkes orders the food and beverage daily. Planning four-to-six games in advance, he may place orders by internet, phone, e-mail, or even text messaging.

Most food products sold at Braves games come from Sysco, while Coca-Cola provides the majority of the beverages. Aramark uses local vendors for items such as produce and seafood. Deliveries arrive every day at their warehouse located inside Turner Field by its loading docks.

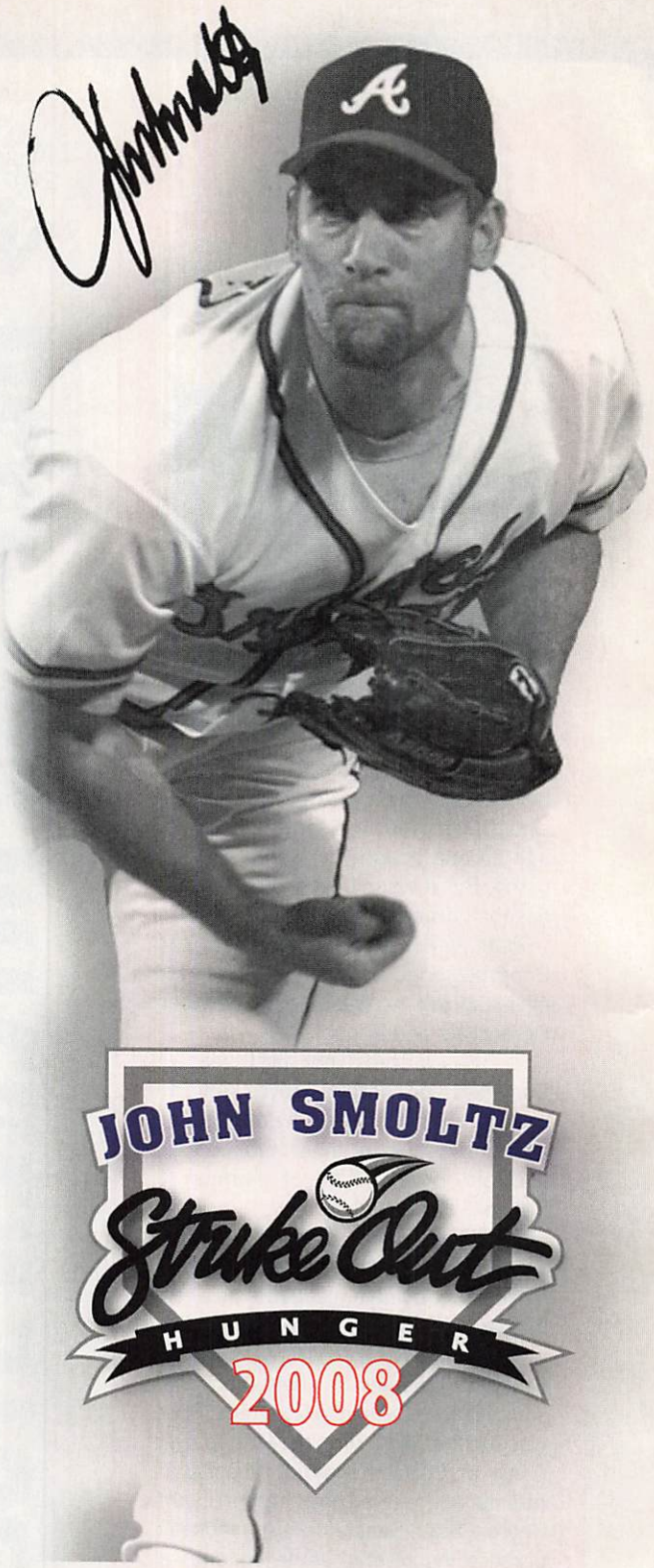
"By looking four-to-six games out, we will have a couple games worth of backup product in the building," said Ranieri. "We always use our history, and then we pad a couple of games in there."

Fans buy 4,800 hotdogs per game on average at Turner Field. During Atlanta's steamy summer months, Aramark sells far more water and other beverages, especially for day games, than during the spring and fall.

Night games see increased sales at the stadium's restaurants. The staff prepares for more combo meals, burgers, and chicken tenders since fans gravitate toward heavier dinner options.

- STEVE FALL

Strike Out Hunger!



SEND IN YOUR DONATION TODAY.

Atlanta Braves pitcher John Smoltz knows it's important to build a better community. That's why John is helping the Atlanta Community Food Bank strike out hunger. We need your help too! You can help Georgians in need by joining John's Strike Out Hunger team. John is donating $200 to the Food Bank for every strikeout this season. And you can receive a sports item autographed by John for every pledge YOU make. As a special thank you for your donation and support, each paid pledge will receive a gift based on the pledge levels shown below. All gifts are tax deductible less the retail value of the item(s) received. All gifts will be autographed by John Smoltz.

Yes!

I will pledge $_____

Signed Gear		Total
Limited Edition Photograph	$ 25 ___	$___
Baseball Cap	$ 75 ___	$___
Baseball	$ 150 ___	$___
Official Bat	$ 400 ___	$___
Official Glove	$ 500 ___	$___
Official Smoltz Braves Jersey	$1000___	$___
All items are	$2150___	$___

Name:_____

Address:_____

City:_____ State:_____ Zip:_____

Phone:_____

The Strike Out Hunger season begins with the Braves opening home game and ends with the final regular season home game. All items based on availability and will be sent to you at the close of the Braves season and upon receipt of payment.

For more information call 404-892-FEED ext.1246. Or visit ACFB.org

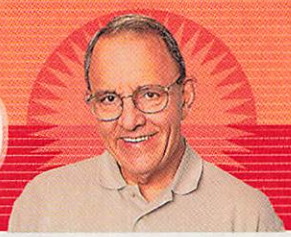
Pledge forms should be mailed to Atlanta Community Food Bank, 732 Joseph E. Lowery Blvd. NW, Atlanta, GA 30318-6628

Please make checks payable to Atlanta Community Food Bank.

ATLANTA COMMUNITY FOOD BANK

Nourishing stronger communities.

SKIP



CARAY CORNER

I'LL NEVER FEEL LIKE "NORMAL" USED TO FEEL

UNFORTUNATELY I don't remember much about last October. I honestly don't. The doctors put me on some medication that turned out to be a bad plan. But I don't criticize the doctors, because I have so many physical problems that what helps one thing can have an adverse effect on something else.

I have diabetes, congestive heart failure, arrhythmia (irregular heart beat), and my liver and kidney function is compromised. It was way off in October, but now it's slightly above where it should be. They can't know how it (medication) will affect me until they try it, and that's what happened.

I was put on OxyContin because I had fallen and broken a couple of ribs and was in a lot of pain. I don't remember going to the hospital, getting in the ambulance... I don't remember anything about being in the hospital for three weeks.

> "IT WAS VERY FRIGHTENING FOR MY FAMILY, BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T KNOW IF I WAS GOING TO MAKE IT. IT WAS MUCH HARDER ON THEM THAN IT WAS ON ME."

It was very frightening for my family, because they didn't know if I was going to make it. It was much harder on them than it was on me.

I woke up one day, and my daughter, my two boys, my wife, and my friend and the best doctor, Charlie Wycliffe, were all around me. I asked, "What the hell are you guys doing here, and where am I?" He answered, "Let's try intensive care at Piedmont Hospital." I said, "Let me ask you the question I asked the last time (I was in the hospital): Am I going to die?" He answered, "Not now, but we'll talk about it later."

I was in the hospital for another two weeks. I had to learn to walk again, using a walker, which is difficult. The people who worked at Piedmont were wonderful. I was in such pain that I asked one nurse for some pills, anything to put me out of it. She just put her arms around me, and we both started crying.

I think that was a big moment, because I began to re-focus on things other than my own pain. I thought about my family, my grandchildren and what they had just gone through, and I knew what it would do to them if I was gone. I started to come back.

During my time in the hospital, I wasn't able to sleep, and when I finally got out, I slept for about 12 hours. Since then, I've had such a terrible time trying to sleep.

EDITOR'S NOTE
Skip Caray writes in this space every other month. Watch for him again in July.

Then around the first week of March, I fell. The more I think about it, the more I think it happened because I was so tired. I was walking across the house from the bedroom to the kitchen, and I fell and hit the hard, limestone floor. I woke up in a pool of blood at 3:30 a.m. It scared my wife, Paula, to death. My doctors have been trying to sort out my medication and get my electrolytes in balance, which is very difficult.

At the time, I thought there's no way I can get back to work. But as time went on, I knew if I didn't try to come back, I'd always wonder if I could have done it.

The game that ended at 12:30 a.m., the home-opener, almost did me in! I'd only slept an hour and a half the night before.

> "WE USED TO DO NINE INNINGS AND DOUBLEHEADERS BY OURSELVES. I COULDN'T DO THAT ANY MORE. HOPEFULLY, I'LL BE ABLE TO DO ALL THE HOME GAMES..."

And I was asleep 30 seconds after sitting in the car when we left to go home. Chip had to wake me up when we got home.

I rarely sleep more than two hours at a time. Some doctors have said that if you've had a near-death experience, your subconscious keeps you from going into a deep sleep. I don't know if that's true or not, but I'm not sleeping much!

When work starts, it's a Godsend. You feel lousy, you feel tired. I've been tired a lot from an assortment of things, but nothing like this. But once the game starts, I'm pretty good. When I do my two and a half innings, then turn it over to Pete (Van Wieren), it's a relief.

We used to do nine innings and doubleheaders by ourselves. I couldn't do that any more. Hopefully, I'll be able to do all the home games, and hopefully as the year goes on and my strength improves, then maybe I can do some traveling.

I'll never feel like "normal" used to feel, but once you accept that, you make do with what you've got.

At one point in the hospital, I woke up and I knew I wasn't at home. There was a light on and I thought, "Oh, brother, I'm back in the hospital." The thought went through my mind: "So this is what it's like to die." I think I was like most people, maybe a little afraid of death. Not any more. I've had 68 great years, great parents and family, a wonderful career.

There are a lot of people in worse shape than I'm in, and it changes your perspective. It's good to remember. If I ever start feeling sorry for myself, I stop and think, "I'm sitting up here with the best seat in the house. I've had a great career. I do what I love to do. When I die, I'll have no regrets."

I've had a great life. I've done everything I wanted to do and more. I enjoy it, and when I don't, it will be time to say goodbye.

Having work to come to is so beneficial, I think. That was my goal. I wanted to be ready for Opening Day. I hated missing spring training. It's my favorite time of year. My grandchildren are down there, but there was no way I could go.

I think I'm doing okay. I listened to a tape of Opening Night, and it sounded okay. When I did my first Bobby Cox Show for radio, I was asking questions that I didn't really know the answers to! I didn't know much about the team, because I hadn't been around it.

PITCHING PAIN

IT'S A GOOD THING the Braves have more pitching depth this year than in the last two seasons, because they had to take advantage of it during the first two weeks of the season.

Mike Hampton was unable to make his first start and returned to the disabled list... **Rafael Soriano** had a quick reoccurrence of the elbow tendinitis that slowed him in the spring and joined Hampton on the DL... And **Chuck James** came off the DL (shoulder) to make one ineffective start and was optioned to Richmond to work off the rust. **John Smoltz** also opened the season on the DL but came off April 6 to start in the Braves' sixth game of the season. Then **Tom Glavine** had to exit his April 13 start at Washington in the first inning due to a right hamstring strain.

As Hampton was warming up in the bullpen April 3 for his first start since Aug. 19, 2005, the injury plagued lefty experienced a strained left pectoral (chest) muscle and was scratched in favor of **Jeff Bennett**. At press time, Hampton had just begun to throw again, but it was unknown when he would make another attempt to start. **Jo-Jo Reyes** was called up from Richmond to replace him on the roster but was sent back three days later when James was activated.

ATLANTA BRAVES

Just 10 minutes before making his first start in over two years, Mike Hampton had to scratch due to a muscle strain in his chest.

Soriano went on the DL April 9 (retroactive to April 7), making him eligible to come off April 23. He didn't make his first exhibition appearance until Mar. 15 for the same reason, but made four regular season appearances before going on the DL. James was activated when Soriano was disabled, then righthander **Jorge Campillo** was called up from Richmond when James was sent down.

In Soriano's absence, the first save opportunity took place April 11 at Washington when **Peter Moylan** pitched a perfect ninth inning to preserve **Tim Hudson**'s 3-0 victory.

THE METS' LOSS

In the off-season, the Braves raided the Mets' roster and signed **Tom Glavine**. They hope they made another significant addition from the Mets Mar. 28 when they picked up switch-hitting utility infielder **Ruben Gotay** off waivers. The 25-year-old Gotay hit .295 with four homers and 24 RBIs in 98 games for the Mets last year. He's particularly effective against right-handed pitchers (.318 last year), and he's a successful pinch-hitter (.288 last year). Gotay, originally drafted by Kansas City in 2000, can play second, third and shortstop. He was traded to the Mets in mid-2006.

To make room on the Opening Day roster for Gotay, the Braves asked waivers on **Scott Thorman** and then outrighted him to Richmond when he cleared waivers.

ON THE GO

In a necessary move to help reduce the roster for Opening Day, the Braves traded **Tyler Yates** to Pittsburgh Mar. 26 in exchange for minor league righthander **Todd Redmond**.

Yates was 2-5 with a 3.96 ERA in 50 appearances in 2006, and 2-3 with a 5.18 ERA in 75 games last year.

The 22-year-old Redmond, primarily a starter, was 7-12 with a 4.54 ERA at Lynchburg of the Carolina League last year and 1-1, 3.12 at Double-A Altoona. A 39th-round draft pick in 2004, his career record is 22-21, 3.30 in 70 games (69 starts). The trade publication Baseball America rated his control the best in the Pirates organization (2.02 walks per nine innings last year).

ROSTER WATCH

The Braves made several moves Mar. 29 to set their roster for the start of the season the following night in Washington. **John Smoltz** (shoulder) and **Chuck James** (shoulder) were placed on the disabled list, retroactive to Mar. 21. The Braves purchased the contract of catcher **Corky Miller**. Outfielder **Josh Anderson**, catcher **Clint Sammons**, righthander **Buddy Carlyle** and lefty **Jeff Ridgway** were optioned to Richmond. Infielder **Brent Lillibridge** and outfielder **Joe Borchard** were reassigned to Richmond.

The Opening Day roster (see page 37) included 12 pitchers, three catchers, six infielders and four outfielders. **Gregor Blanco** is wearing No. 18, **Ruben Gotay** No. 8, and **Martin Prado** No. 14.

BAG OF TRICKS

Bobby Cox made an unusual move in the 10th inning April 4 against Pittsburgh when he pulled right-handed reliever **Chris Resop** and put him in left field while lefty **Royce Ring** was summoned to pitch to left-handed batter **Adam LaRoche**. After Ring struck out LaRoche, Cox brought Resop back in to pitch (**Gregor Blanco** came off the bench to play left), but the strategy was spoiled when **Xavier Nady** delivered what proved to be the game-winning hit.

SMOLTZ REPORT

John Smoltz made only one start in spring training and opened the season on the disabled list. However, in his first two starts, he was 2-0 with a 0.82 ERA through April 12, allowing just one run in 11 innings. He was bothered by a "knot" between his neck and shoulder. In his first start April 6 against the Mets, he worked five shutout innings (78 pitches), and in his second start

April 12 at Washington, he gave up one run in six innings (90 pitches). Due to a rainout on April 4, Smoltz's first start was pushed back to April 7 at Colorado. Due to the anticipated cold weather, though, **Tom Glavine** switched spots with Smoltz, allowing him to pitch April 6 in Atlanta.

FRANC FILE

On April 12, **Jeff Francoeur** had a good *week*. In the Braves' 10-2 win at Washington, he hit two home runs and drove in a career-high seven runs. All came in the first six innings. In the sixth, Francoeur and longtime buddy **Brian McCann** hit back-to-back home runs on consecutive pitches.

Francoeur now has the second-longest consecutive games played streak in the majors - 337 through April 12. Cleveland's **Grady Sizemore** leads with 368 through April 11. Juan Pierre's streak of 434 ended Mar. 31 when new Dodgers manager **Joe Torre** didn't use him.

SHORT HOPS

- **Mike Gonzalez**, working his way back from elbow surgery, pitched during batting practice at extended spring training at Disney's Wide World of Sports in mid-April and was scheduled to pitch in game action a few days later. The Braves hope he'll be ready for activation around June 1.

- The Braves wore new alternate navy blue jerseys and all-navy caps to open the season Mar. 30 in Washington. The new uniform will be used periodically for road games. It's the first new look in the road uniform since 1987. The team is wearing a "Beach" patch on their left sleeves all year in memory of former coach **Jim Beauchamp**, who died during the off-season.

- **Tim Hudson**'s Opening Night start at Washington was the fifth of his career and second as a Brave.

- **Kelly Johnson** sustained a knee strain in the season opener Mar. 30. He said the knee bothered him last year, but MRIs performed in January and April 1 did not reveal any structural damage. He didn't play again until April 5, when he delivered a pinch-hit grand slam against the Mets.

FRANK WREN
GENERAL MANAGER

INJURIES PROVE YOU NEVER HAVE TOO MUCH PITCHING

I THINK THE WEATHER played a factor in our slow start and inconsistencies. We had real bad conditions in Colorado. Once we get warmer weather and conditions where it's more conducive for everybody to stay in a groove, we'll be better able to evaluate our team.

The starting pitching has been very good, and the bullpen has the potential to be very good once we get it constituted with all the right people in a few weeks. And we're going to score plenty of runs. All the ingredients are there for a good team. It's a matter of putting it together.

Almost every game our starter has given us a good chance to win. If that holds up, and I think it will, we'll have a good season.

We know you never have too much pitching, which is why we didn't want to lose any of our depth this spring. We tried every way we could to keep everyone. It doesn't matter how many pitchers you have, it's never enough.

John Smoltz is incredible. He goes out on a regular basis with outstanding stuff and gives an outstanding performance. He matched up against (John) Santana and won that battle.

Tom Glavine's hamstring doesn't appear to be bad. It just happened, so we're not sure. It looks like a slight strain that he caught in time.

Rafael Soriano is progressing. We think it's only (elbow) tendinitis, but we want to get him completely healthy.

Mike Hampton is progressing each day. He's out there throwing, and it (chest muscle strain) doesn't appear to be a major problem, only a nuisance.

We know what Chuck James can do. He just got thrown into a bad situation the first time out - at Coors Field with that weather. He threw well in the spring.

> "JUST LIKE LAST YEAR, OUR HITTING SEEMS TO BE INCONSISTENT... I THINK THERE'S A MATURITY FACTOR INVOLVED IN THAT."

We like Jorge Campillo, who came in and gave us two perfect innings at Washington. He led the Pacific Coast League in ERA (3.07) last year, so he's had some success. He's got quality stuff. He's creative and doesn't get flustered. He's got some pitches that give big hitters some trouble.

Mike Gonzalez is doing well, and we now think June 1 is a conservative date for having him back. He's had some back spasms recently, but his arm feels good, and that's all we're concerned about. He's been on a real solid track all spring, and we're optimistic he'll be able to join us sometime in May, if all goes well.

Omar Infante (broken hand) will start taking live BP in Florida the next couple of days. After that, he'll go out on an injury rehab assignment. He could rejoin us in a couple of weeks.

Obviously, we have a lot of injuries, and everybody else seems to, as well. The players are bigger and stronger than they used to be, and there's a school of thought that they have more muscle to strain and tear because of that.

There weren't even weight rooms in ballparks 25 years ago. There's been a big change in philosophy, and maybe that makes them more susceptible to injury. But we're comfortable with the programs we design for our players.

Plus, I don't think there's any doubt that the players are more cautious and the clubs are more cautious now than they used to be if they feel a little something. There's a lot more at stake than there used to be.

Just like last year, our hitting seems to be inconsistent. We either score a lot, or struggle to score. I think there's a maturity factor involved in that. When you have a lot of young hitters, like we do, that's what you get. But I think our hitters are getting more mature all the time, and we'll see a more consistent performance as the season goes along, which will make the whole team better.

Quite a septet: Liz Johnson, Jordon Smith, Kayley Davis, Ashley Dean, Jessica Walker, Lauren Taylor and Kristen Carruth.

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

"Take Me Out To The..."

Fans Sing For Their Tickets and Reach For The High Note In Idol-Style Competition

BY MARTHA PAYNE

TURNER FIELD, OPENING NIGHT: A cluster of fans gathers above the bullpen to watch Tom Glavine warm up for his much-anticipated Braves' return. Elsewhere, all eyes are on Jeff Francoeur and Mark Kotsay as they stretch their quads while Matt Diaz high-steps it across the outfield. But wait, what's this disturbance on the Terrace level, something drawing attention away from the field... toe-tapping, jabs of laughter, music, of a sort?

"Buy me some peanuts and Cracker..."

It's a familiar tune, yet somehow it feels misplaced (and tragically off-key). Hmm, it's nowhere close to the seventh inning yet, but without a doubt, "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" is being sung, somewhere...

It's coming from Aisle 228 in the concessions area... a group of die-hard Braves' fans - four 20-something guys - decked out in Braves gear, A-caps, foam tomahawks stuffed into pockets, Braves jackets and fleeces... Are they rapping? No, more of a croon, really. "...Let me root, root, root for the home team..."

Hold on, those jackets are coming off! Whoa - the t-shirts, too! (One flexing bicep sports a tomahawk - airbrush art? Or tattoo?).

"It's one, two, three strikes you're out..."

Our happy singers really belt it out now, then finish with a flourish, holding strong on "ball GAME" with big, sloppy smiles. And is that a video camera out in front? A microphone to the left, a doubtful Simon look-alike wearing Braves' staff garb in the far corner?

Maybe it was inevitable. The Braves joining with what's beginning to look less like a passing trend than another great American pastime - the search for the country's next entertainment idol.

Really, it makes perfect sense. America's Team playing a game steeped in tradition, as patriotic as turkey in November, fireworks in July, yes, even apple pie...

And where better to hunt for homegrown talent than at a ballpark in the sunny South, a hotbed of opportunity and Dancing with the Stars' dreams coming true? After all, the first five American Idol winners hailed from the South (including Snellville's own Diana Degarmo).

The real wonder may be that it's taken this long for the Braves to give some silky-voiced star or starlet a shot at the big time.

But honestly... Take Me Out to the Ballgame?

Tonally speaking, baseball's unofficial anthem doesn't quite measure up to idol favorites like "Ribbon in the Sky" or "Proud Mary," but this old Tin Pan Alley song has become the stuff of legend.

Originally scribbled on a scrap of paper in 1908 by vaudeville lyricist Jack Norworth as he zipped through New York's subway system, the song, ranked third most sung in America behind Happy Birthday and the Star-Spangled Banner, turns 100 this year. Though neither Norworth nor his composer-partner Albert von Tilzer had ever been to a baseball game, the simple shoulder-swaying tune (actually a waltz, if you can believe that) has for a century managed to capture the fundamental longing for the ballpark experience every true fan has felt.

In fact, the song keeps being re-cast in new versions - YouTube currently carries 29 video renditions (including a somewhat unsettling effort by Ozzie Osbourne), and it's been arranged for everything from the mandolin to a full orchestra and performed by such varied artists as Andre Previn and the Goo Goo Dolls.

Yet there's no place like home. Ever since Skip Caray's dad, Harry, etched the song into baseball history with his less than harmonious nightly sing-alongs at Comiskey Park and later, Wrigley Field, home for this song is Anypark, USA, during the seventh-inning stretch.

By way of honoring the centennial of this great ditty, MLB has issued a challenge to its teams: Find a star, a talent, a lover of baseball with the zeal and energy and adequate breath to do Harry Caray proud.

The prize? The local favorite receives four free tickets to see the Braves play the Astros on the Fourth of July, and more importantly, earns the chance to lead the seventh-inning group-sing that day.

Then, depending on how the Braves' Cracker Jack idol fares against ballpark winners nationwide, he or she could win a trip to a Yankees' game and, yes, the chance to air it out, on the big stage in the Bronx.

Jonathon Echeverry (R) knows it's "three strikes, yer out!" - while Jeanne Miller (below) looks like she really wants to win those tickets.

Forty-plus idol wannabes showed up on Opening Night at Turner Field, followed by other hopefuls during games later in the week. Some were focused and competitive, others not so much. One duo, in spite of a prompt board clearly displaying the lyrics, couldn't seem to recall the words - maybe they were near-sighted, or maybe they made too many visits to the Tomahawk Tavern conveniently located beside the stage.

Others, the less bold, hovered near the action, queued up, hummed a few scales, then lost their nerve. Hey, it takes guts to hit that high note on, "It's a sha-a-a-ame!"

Yet most persevered. Perhaps one Danny Foster of New York (offspring of a Mets' fan-Yankees' fan couple) put it best. Just before he and his buddy, Josh Culbreth of Florida, gave an enthusiastic if less-than-practiced version of Norworth's masterpiece, he shouted, "Man, I'll do anything for free Braves tickets."

And how did he feel about the chance to lead the crowd in song?

"That would be the sweetest ever."

Good luck. Hope to hear you again in July!

DISNEY EXTRAVAGANZA

DISNEY

BRAVES AT DISNEY

1998	118,388	15 GAMES	2004	136,446	16 GAMES
1999	115,549	15 GAMES	2005	127,542	14 GAMES
2000	129,883	15 GAMES	2006	150,465	17 GAMES
2001	123,152	14 GAMES	2007	143,310	16 GAMES
2002	121,704	17 GAMES	2008	138,811	16 GAMES
2003	124,002	15 GAMES			

A RECORD CROWD of 11,606 saw the Braves beat the Tigers, 3-2, at Disney's Wide World of Sports Mar. 20, and the Braves attracted 138,611 fans to their spring training facility for 16 exhibition games. The total attendance ranked second among the 18 teams training in Florida and was just 886 less than the Yankees drew (139,497) at Legends Field in Tampa.

The Braves' total attendance was the third-highest in their 11 springs at Disney. Besides having their all-time single game attendance high, they drew two other crowds that rank among their all-time top 13 (11,259 on Mar. 9 vs. St. Louis, 10th; and 11,082 on Mar. 27 vs. the Mets, 13th).

The Braves played an exhibition game against the University of Georgia along with 15 home games against major league opponents, averaging 8,675 fans per game. They had a 10-5-1 record at Disney. There were no rainouts.

Another highlight of the season was re-naming the Disney ballpark Champion Stadium before a nationally-televised audience Feb. 29 on ESPN. The complex has been the Braves' permanent spring training home since 1998.

CHECK THE SCHEDULE

Due to a rainout at Turner Field on April 4 and a snowout at Colorado on April 10, there are a couple of changes on the upcoming schedule. The April 4 postponement against the Mets is rescheduled as the first part of a split day-night doubleheader May 20 at Turner Field. The makeup game is scheduled at 1 p.m. (Peachtree TV), and the regular game remains a 7 p.m. start (SportSouth).

After the Braves dropped the first three games of a series at Colorado, the fourth game was postponed due to several inches of snow April 10. The game was rescheduled for June 16 (SportSouth) in Denver, when both clubs would have had an off day. Game time has not been announced.

CUT SHORT

Javy Lopez announced his retirement shortly after **Bobby Cox** informed him Mar. 22 that he would not be on the season-opening roster. Cox talked to Lopez, 37, about the possibility of playing in the minors, but the catcher elected not to do so. Lopez, who played with the Braves from 1993-2003, was trying to make a comeback after not playing since last spring when he was cut by the Rockies. One of the most-popular players in Atlanta Braves history, Lopez was given the honor of throwing out the ceremonial first pitch before the Turner Field opener Mar. 31.

IN ESPAÑOL

Braves games can now be heard every Sunday and Tuesday on VIVA 105.7. Veteran broadcasters **Fernando Palacios** and **Pete Manzano** are doing the play-by-play. VIVA 105.7, a Clear Channel station, is Atlanta's #1 Latin radio station reaching over 209,000 Latinos with a 23,000 watt signal. It will carry 50 Braves games this season.

The Braves also launched a Spanish-language website at BravesBeisbol.com.

TURNER FIELD BEAT

Peachtree TV, home to 45 Braves telecasts, commissioned 615 Music of Nashville to produce a theme song to promote the broadcasts. Entitled "The Braves Play Here", it can be heard online at 615music.com/core/whats_new.cfm.

The song was written by **G. Barnhill** and **R. Wachtler** and is performed by Warner Bros. Records recording artist James Otto.

Wachtler describes the song as, "An upbeat, fun song that incorporates the famous Braves chant heard at Turner field." 615 Music provides production music and original themes, for television networks and programs, feature films, radio, commercials, on-air promos, interactive applications and multi-media clients.

DISNEY SURPRISE

Mary Lou Brooks, one of the Braves' most-dedicated fans and a long-time Braves 400 Club board member, experienced quite a spring training thrill this year at Disney's Wide World of Sports. On Mar. 7, prior to the Tigers-Braves game, she was chosen at random by Disney employees to receive the Disney Dream Giveaway for the day.

The package of gifts and surprises included throwing out the first pitch before the game. Brooks also enjoyed the pre-game buffet in the press room, received a tour, was presented with a cap and t-shirt,

got some autographs on the field, and had her picture taken with **Mark Teixeira** and **Bobby Cox**. Finally, she had her picture taken with minor leaguer **Tyler Flowers**, who she said, "tried to catch my pitch," and was escorted to a prime seat location.

"Needless to say, it was a thrilling day," she said.

MILWAUKEE MEMORIES

The Milwaukee Braves Historical Association will honor **Bobby Thomson** (OF, 1954-57) on May 15 at Potawatomi Bingo Casino's Northern Light Theater, beginning at 6 p.m. (Central). Tickets are $125 each. Thomson and **Andy Pafko** (OF, 1953-59) are scheduled to appear. To order tickets, send a check for $125 payable to MBHA and addressed to: **Tom Kaminski**, 2614 E. Bottsford Ave., St. Francis, Wis. 53235. Everyone in attendance will receive a baseball signed by Thomson. For more information, e-mail **Bud Lea** at buddylea@aol.com.

BALLS & STRIKES

- The wines named after **Tom Glavine**, **Chipper Jones** and **Brian McCann** that are being sold for charity can be ordered by phone at (978) 297-5477, as well as at charitywines.com. The wines are featured on page 62 of the April '08 ChopTalk.

- **Yunel Escobar** was named 2007 NL Rookie Of The Year by the Latino Sports Writers & Broadcasters Association.

- **Mark Kotsay**, normally jersey No. 11, was among many major leaguers who wore No. 42 on April 15 in honor of **Jackie Robinson**. Robinson's number is universally retired by all major league teams in recognition of him breaking the race barrier in 1947.

- **Jeff Francoeur** was hit with a pitch in the lower lip Mar. 16 by the Cardinals' **Todd Wellemeyer**. He left the game with a bloodied mouth under his own power, but there was no damage other than some abrasions inside the lip, and he was back in the lineup Mar. 20.

- The Braves signed veteran utilityman **Scott Spiezio** to a minor league contract Mar. 31 and then released him April 12.

BOBBY COX

MANAGER

OUR PITCHING DEPTH'S ALREADY PAYING OFF

WE KNEW GOING INTO THE SEASON that we needed to have more depth in our rotation and on our bench. We didn't have either of those things last year.

It was one of those times, as things evolve, where we didn't have the pitching at the minor league level that was prepared to come to the big leagues. But the front office remedied that situation, and it's already paid off.

We had to bring up Jo-Jo Reyes for a short period when Mike Hampton went on the disabled list, after John Smoltz started the season on the DL. We had Chuck James held back in surplus, so he started in Hampton's spot. We even had Buddy Carlyle down in Richmond who could have been called up, except that he'd pitched the night before we would have needed him.

It's a lot of going back and forth and back again, but we had to have them. We feel good that any time we need to bring someone in, they are capable of filling in and doing a good major league job.

Frank Wren worked hard to pull together a good bench. We picked up Ruben Gotay off waivers. It was a good pickup. Tom Glavine really liked him when he played last year for the Mets. So, our bench could wind up being one of our strengths.

It's amazing the number of new players we have on our roster. You get a feel for the strengths of the position guys immediately. The bullpen spots take a little longer, but the pitching always works its way through and puts guys in their proper slots.

> "OUR LINEUP IS REALLY STRONG. THERE ARE NO EASY OUTS ANY WAY YOU LOOK AT IT. THERE ARE NO EASY PICKINGS."

Even if I have an idea of what a guy's got, based on scouting reports or whatever, I still have to watch him in a live game. And my impressions evolve when I watch a guy pitch through different situations.

I think our bullpen is so strong, mainly because of all the different elements we have. I'm so impressed with our closer, Rafael Soriano. He and Roger McDowell have worked on a good changeup that now is a huge weapon. He can throw so hard, and throw strikes, that he can really get hitters off balance. I'm really impressed with his progress.

And we've got the young guys, Blaine Boyer and Manny Acosta. I like Blaine a lot. He's a good guy to mix in with Acosta and Moylan, but I think he'll be a closer someday.

During the first week of games, I was impressed with a number of things. Our lineup is really strong. There are no easy outs any way you look at it. There are no easy pickings.

Unfortunately, we lost a couple of tough games, a walk-off homer on Opening Night, and some other homers we didn't expect. Baseball has a way of evening things out, though. If you lose a game on a wild pitch, you'll win a game or two down the road. If you look at the outcomes of games and say, "If we had done this or that, we would have won the pennant," but how about the games they gave us?

Having Glavine back in our dugout is a great thing. It's a great experience for many of our younger players. He's an upbeat guy, still a great pitcher. He brings a lot of class and leadership. Mark Kotsay's been outstanding in center field. He's a knowledgeable player, and I think he's surprised our fans with his defense.

It was unfortunate to see Mike Hampton have to go on the disabled list. I was heartbroken for him. We knew there was a little something bothering him when he threw his side session, but didn't know the extent of it until he was warming up the night that he was supposed to start.

LIVE IT. WATCH IT. LOVE IT.
04/03/2008 Watch LIVE games online on MLB.TV
LIVE
NEWS: 2008 promises to be a banner
GATE 6 SEC 19 BOX/ROW 285 D SEAT 5 PRICE $35.00
Braves
Visit BRAVES.com,
the official site for Braves fans, and
get more from the team you love.
LIVE Games, Fantasy, Tickets,
News, Stats and Authentic Gear.
braves.com
Where baseball is always on
©2008 MLB Advanced Media, L.P. All rights reserved. All Major League Baseball trademarks and service marks used herein are the property of the applicable MLB entity.

DON'T LEAVE FOR YOUR *Honeymoon*

– OR ANYWHERE ELSE – WITHOUT IT!

ChopTalk

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE ATLANTA BRAVES

SUBSCRIBE NOW

1-877-655-CHOP

THIS PHOTO WAS SUBMITTED WITHOUT SOLICITATION BY CHOPTALK SUSCRIBERS RYAN & REGAN GOLDBERG FROM BONITA SPRINGS, FLA., AND WAS TAKEN ON THEIR WEDDING DAY

ADDED BONUS!

10% OFF

YOUR NEXT MERCHANDISE PURCHASE FROM THE

Braves CLUBHOUSE COLLECTION

MAIL IT IN! CHOPTALK

SEND NAME, ADDRESS AND CHECK OR CARD INFO TO:

P.O. BOX 80750
CONYERS, GA
30013-8750

PHONE IT IN! 1.877.655.2467

ORDER ONLINE!

braves.com/choptalk

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

ChopTalk

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE ATLANTA BRAVES

1-877-655-2467

SEND TO:

NAME

ADDRESS APT. NO.

CITY STATE ZIP

BILL TO:

NAME

ADDRESS APT. NO.

CITY STATE ZIP

○ $37.95 1 YEAR (12 ISSUES)

○ $67.95 2 YEARS (24 ISSUES)

○ PLEASE CHECK IF THIS IS A RENEWAL.

TO AVOID HASSLE AND MAXIMIZE SAVINGS, I AUTHORIZE CONTINUATION OF THIS SUBSCRIPTION WITHOUT NOTIFICATION BEFORE EACH NEW TERM. I WILL RECEIVE AN INVOICE IF I WISH TO CHECK, OR IF I PAY BY CREDIT CARD, I WILL RECEIVE A NOTICE THAT MY ACCOUNT WILL BE CHARGED AT THE LOWEST AVAILABLE RATE. I'LL HAVE 10 DAYS TO CANCEL AT ANY TIME. I'LL RECEIVE A REFUND FOR ALL UNMAILED ISSUES.

○ PAYMENT ENCLOSED

○ BILL MY CREDIT CARD

○ MC ○ VISA ○ AMEX ○ DISCOVER

CC# EXP.

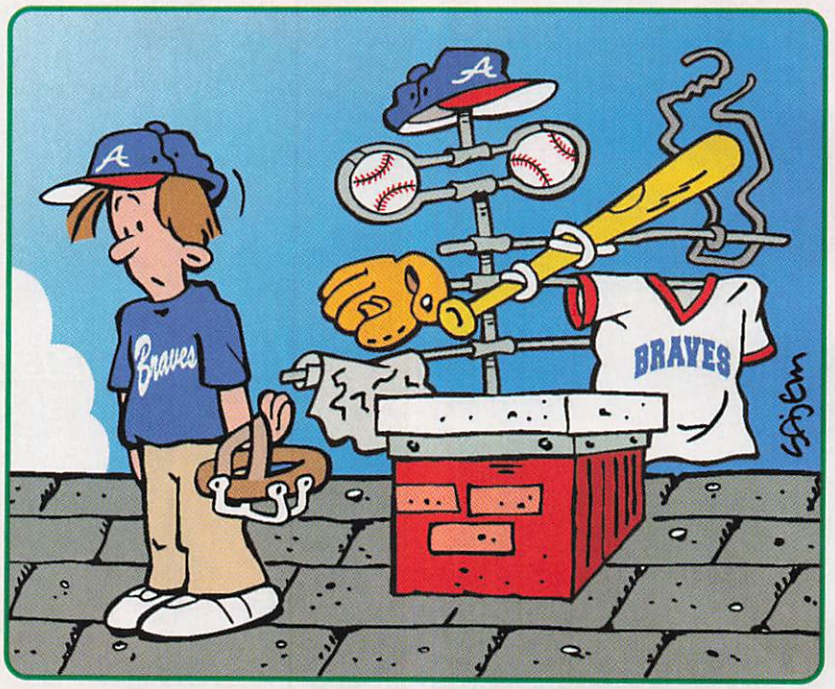
$37.95 1 YEAR (12 ISSUES)

$67.95 2 YEARS (24 ISSUES)

GOT PEACHTREE?

IN THE NICK OF TIME, MOST FANS FIND THEY CAN WATCH THE "45 MISSING GAMES"

BY CAROL CARTER



FORGET PINS AND NEEDLES. It was more like sitting on a splintered baseball bat.

Braves fans across the Southeast held their collective breath throughout the off-season, wondering how they would get to watch the games this season. All they knew for awhile was that the Superstation was dropping out of the picture after showing many Braves games (70 last season) for more than 30 years.

Then came the news that SportSouth would carry 80 games; FSN South, 25; ESPN and Fox Network, 12; and Peachtree TV, 45 games.

But, what the heck was Peachtree TV?

Well, it is Channel 17 in Atlanta, and it used to be WTBS, the Superstation. Now it is WPCH.

When the 2008 schedule came out, says Kevin Wheelis of The Fan SportsRadio in Brunswick, Ga., fans saw "PTV," for Peachtree TV, and thought, "What in the world is that? After having the Braves for so long, they were confused about why all the games weren't on TV."

Next, it seemed clear that those 45 Peachtree TV games would be shown in the metro Atlanta region only. At this news, Braves fans in the five-and-a-half-state designated Braves franchise territory (Georgia, Alabama, S. Carolina, Mississippi, Tennessee and western N. Carolina) stopped wondering and began wishing and hoping that somehow they would be able to get those Peachtree TV games.

In Asheville, N.C., Jim Baker, a Braves season-ticket holder for seven years, even though his home is 210 miles from Turner Field, was concerned and frustrated about those 45 "missing" games.

"I felt like logic dictated that eventually some kind of arrangement would be made to cover the areas in the Southeast outside of the Atlanta market, but until it actually was concluded, I was concerned," Baker said. "I just don't understand why the fans were left in the dark for so long. I'm satisfied. I just don't agree with the approach that was taken in the off-season."

Baker, like other fans, began to understand in March that television affiliates across the Southeast were signing deals with Peachtree TV to carry the 45 games.

On Mar. 13, Bryan Fazio wrote in the Valdosta Daily Times that: Valdosta residents would be able to see every Atlanta Braves games this year, despite the club's change in television networks.

Other fans had to wait longer for the news. In North Carolina, John Boyle of the Asheville Citizen-Times broke the good news on Mar. 30, the day of the season opener against the Nationals in Washington. The welcome news for Asheville area fans, however, didn't spread to fans elsewhere in North Carolina, where some remain without the Peachtree TV games. Deals have been struck, though, with cable affiliates in Charlotte, Hendersonville and Franklin to telecast the 45 games.

In South Carolina, word that the games would be available came just in time for Time Warner to show the home opener Mar. 31, which was telecast by Peachtree TV, says Doug Nye, sports writer for The State in Columbia.

"All of the Peachtree (TV) games are carried on Time Warner, channel 163 in South Carolina. Anyone with a digital converter can watch them.

"I got numerous calls before and after the deal was made," Nye said, "even got one from Alabama and another from North Carolina, wanting to know if their Time Warner system was going to have them."

Ryan Fowler of WTBC radio in Tuscaloosa, Ala., fielded several calls from angry Braves fans before a deal was finally announced that fans in his area would get the 45 games. Even though it worked out and most fans haven't missed a game, Fowler said, "A lot of folks were disappointed (before the season opened). I guess their impression was they were kind of getting shafted. They were pretty upset."

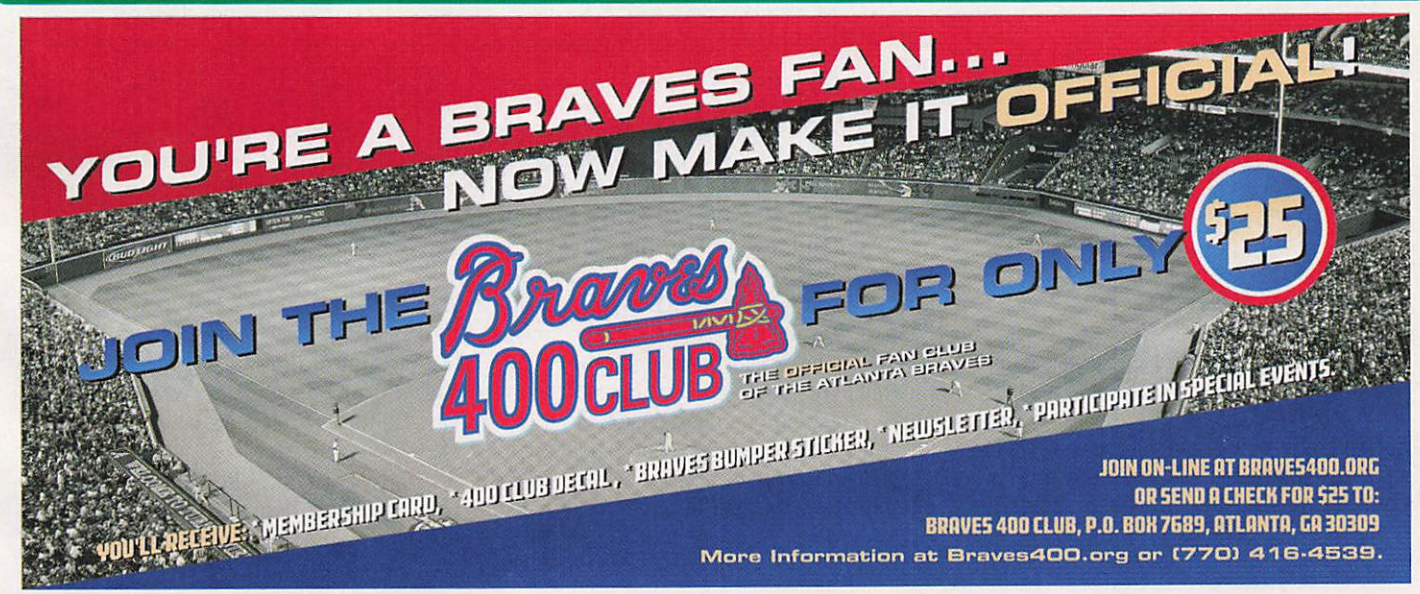
The plan all along, says Gina McKenzie of Peachtree TV, was to make the 45 games available to fans in the Southeast.

"It just took some time to pull it together," she said.

There could be some additions to the accompanying list, McKenzie said, "But the list is pretty extensive and covers most, if not all, of the Braves footprint. I think the fans should be happy."

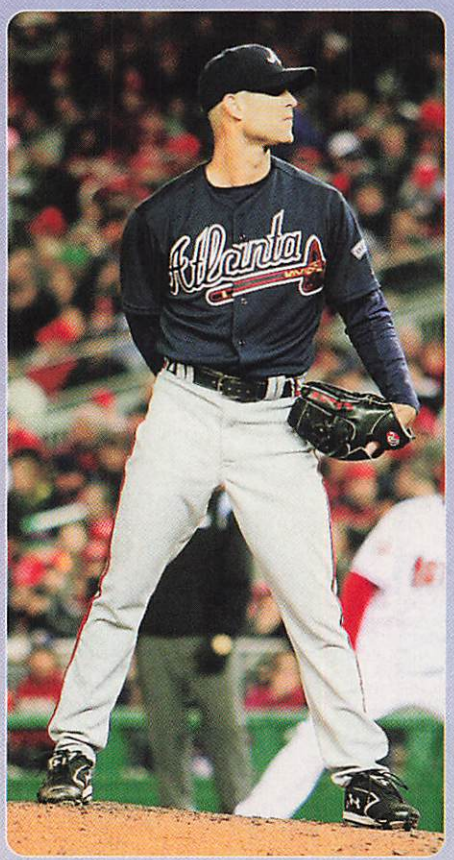
Fowler, for his part, believes they are happy - at least those who can watch all the games. In the end, he said, "We didn't miss a beat over here, so great job on the Braves part in getting the games back on the air."

MARKET	P'TREE CARRIER	CH
ALABAMA		
ABBEVILLE	COMCAST	24
ALBERTVILLE	CHARTER	30
ALEXANDER CITY	CHARTER	22
ANNISTON	CABLE ONE	2
AUBURN/OPELIKA	CHARTER	27
BAILEYTON	CHARTER	27
BRIDGEPORT	CHARTER	27
CENTERPOINT	CHARTER	15
CHILDERSBURG	CHARTER	15
CLAYTON	COMCAST	98
COOSA COUNTY	CHARTER	22
DAUPHIN ISLAND	COMCAST	35
DECATUR	CHARTER	30
DOTHAN	COMCAST	24
ELBA	CHARTER	16
FAIRFIELD	CHARTER	15
FLORENCE	COMCAST	18
GADSDEN	COMCAST	30
GARDENDALE	CHARTER	15
GUNTERSVILLE	CHARTER	30
GURLEY	CHARTER	17
HARTSELLE	CHARTER	30
HENAGAR	CHARTER	27
HOKES BLUFF	CHARTER	14
HOMEWOOD	CHARTER	15
HOOVER	CHARTER	15
HUNTSVILLE	COMCAST	67
HURTSBORO	R.M. GREENE	7
JASPER	CHARTER	15
LEEDS	CHARTER	15
MENTONE	CHARTER	27
MOBILE	COMCAST	37
MONTGOMERY	CHARTER	27
MOULTON	CHARTER	30
NORTHPORT	CHARTER	15
OZARK	CHARTER	16
PHENIX CITY	R.M. GREENE	7
PIEDMONT	CHARTER	51
RUSSELLVILLE	CHARTER	30
SCOTTSBORO	CHARTER	30
SEALE	R.M. GREENE	7
SOUTHSIDE	CHARTER	17
SELMA	CHARTER	27
SYLACAUGA	CHARTER	15
TALLADEGA	CHARTER	15
TROY	CHARTER	16
TUSCALOOSA	COMCAST	29
TUSKEGEE	CHARTER	22
TWIN COUNTY	COMCAST	29
WESTOVER	CHARTER	15
WEST POINT/LANETT	CHARTER	77
GEORGIA		
ADRIAN	COMCAST	18
AUGUSTA	COMCAST	181
BRUNSWICK	COMCAST	36
CHATSWORTH	CHARTER	27
CLAXTON	COMCAST	24
COLONEL'S ISLAND	COMCAST	24
COLUMBUS	CHARTER	77
DALTON	CHARTER	27
DALTON	DALTON UTILITIES	83
DARIEN	COMCAST	29
DOUGLAS	CHARTER	64
DUBLIN	CHARTER	18
ELBERTON	COMCAST	26
FORT GORDON	CHARTER	68
GLENNVILLE	COMCAST	13
GUYTON	COMCAST	20
HINESVILLE	COMCAST	26
HOMERVILLE	COMCAST	15
LAFAYETTE	COMCAST	27
LAKE PARK	CHARTER	42
LINCOLNTON	COMCAST	37
LOUISVILLE	COMCAST	23
MACON	COX	15
METTER	COMCAST	24
MILLEDGEVILLE	CHARTER	70
MILLEN	COMCAST	17
MONTEZUMA	COMCAST	16
MOUNT VERNON	COMCAST	19
PEMBROKE	COMCAST	20
PERRY	COMSOUTH	100
QUITMAN	COMCAST	13
RINGGOLD	CHARTER	27
SAVANNAH	COMCAST	20
SKIDAWAY	COMCAST	20
SOPERTON	COMCAST	20
SUMMERVILLE	CHARTER	27
SYLVANIA	COMCAST	45
THOMASVILLE	CITY OF THOMASVILLE	97
TIFTON	CITY NET	80
TRENTON	CHARTER	27
TWIN CITY	COMCAST	28
TYBEE ISLAND	COMCAST	20
WARRENTON	COMCAST	31
WASHINGTON	COMCAST	23
WAVERLY HALL	CHARTER	16
WAYNESBORO	COMCAST	181
WAYNESVILLE	COMCAST	26
WOODBINE	COMCAST	33
WRIGHTSVILLE	COMCAST	21
MISSISSIPPI		
BILOXI/OCEAN SPRINGS/VANCLEAVE	CABLE ONE	18
CORINTH REBUILD	COMCAST	14
FULTON	COMCAST	48
HATTIESBURG	COMCAST	25
JACKSON	COMCAST	28
LAUREL	COMCAST	25
LONG BEACH/GULFPORT	CABLE ONE	18
MERIDIAN	COMCAST	17
PASCAGOULA/GAUTIER/ESCATAWAPA	CABLE ONE	18
PAULDING CABLE	COMCAST	52
PICAYUNE	CHARTER	68
RANKIN COUNTY	COMCAST	28
TUPELO	COMCAST	48
NORTH CAROLINA		
ASHEVILLE	CHARTER	77
CHARLOTTE	TIME WARNER	136
FRANKLIN	MEDIA COM	9
HENDERSONVILLE	MEDIA COM	13
SOUTH CAROLINA		
ABBEVILLE	CHARTER	58
AIKEN/ALLENDALE	ATLANTIC BROADBAND	66
ANDERSON	CHARTER	58
BEAUFORT	CHARTER	77
BEAUFORT	COMCAST	15
CALHOUN FALLS	COMCAST	41
CENTERVILLE	CHARTER	39
CHARLESTON	COMCAST	42
COLUMBIA	CHARTER	17
COLUMBIA	TIME WARNER	163
GAFFNEY	CHARTER	58
GREENVILLE	CHARTER	58
HAMPTON	COMCAST	31
LADYS ISLAND/BEAUFORT	COMCAST	52
NEWBERRY	COMCAST	51
PICKENS	CHARTER	58
SPARTANBURG	CHARTER	58
UNION	CHARTER	58
WALTERBORO	COMCAST	38
WHITMIRE	CHARTER	58
TENNESSEE		
ALCOA	CHARTER	26
ATHENS	COMCAST	27
BATTLEFIELD	COMCAST	27
BENTON	COMCAST	27
BULLS GAP	COMCAST	37
CARTHAGE	COMCAST	27
CHATTANOOGA	COMCAST	27
CLARKSVILLE	CHARTER	34
CLEVELAND	CHARTER	27
COOKEVILLE	CHARTER	17
COSBY/COBBLY NOBB	COMCAST	33
CROSSVILLE	CHARTER	17
FAIRFIELD GLADE	COMCAST	33
FARRAGUT	CHARTER	26
FAYETTEVILLE	CHARTER	17
FLINTVILLE	CHARTER	17
FRANKLIN COUNTY	COMCAST	44
FRIENDSVILLE	COMCAST	48
GRAY	COMCAST	48
GREENEVILLE	COMCAST	37
GRIMSLEY	COMCAST	98
HARRIMAN	COMCAST	33
HARTSVILLE	COMCAST	27
HENDERSON	CHARTER	69
HUNTSVILLE/ONEIDA	COMCAST	98
JACKSON	CHARTER	69
JAMESTOWN	COMCAST	98
JASPER	CHARTER	27
JOHNSON CITY/BRISTOL	CHARTER	15
KINGSPORT	CHARTER	15
KNOXVILLE	COMCAST	33
LAFAYETTE(ATT)	COMCAST	27
LAFOLLETTE	COMCAST	33
LAWRENCEBURG	CHARTER	17
LEBANON	CHARTER	17
LEWISBURG	CHARTER	17
LEXINGTON	CHARTER	69
LIVINGSTON	COMCAST	50
LORETTO	CHARTER	17
LOUDON COUNTY	CHARTER	26
LYNCHBURG	COMCAST	44
MANCHESTER	CHARTER	17
MARTIN	CHARTER	55
MCKENZIE	CHARTER	55
MCMINNVILLE	VOLUNTEER WIRELESS	59
MCNAIRY COUNTY	CHARTER	69
MEMPHIS UPGRADED	COMCAST	6
MONROE COUNTY	CHARTER	26
MONTEAGLE	CHARTER	17
MORRISTOWN	CHARTER	26
NASHVILLE	COMCAST	27
NEWBERN	CHARTER	55
NIOTA	COMCAST	27
NORRIS	COMCAST	33
OAK RIDGE	COMCAST	33
PARIS	CHARTER	55
PARROTSVILLE	COMCAST	11
PULASKI	CHARTER	17
RARITY BAY	COMCAST	27
ROGERSVILLE	CHARTER	15
SAVANNAH	CHARTER	69
SEVIER COUNTY	CHARTER	26
SMITHVILLE	COMCAST	40
TELLICO	CHARTER	26
TOWNSEND	COMCAST	33
UNION COUNTY	COMCAST	33
VONORE	COMCAST	27
WARTBURG	COMCAST	98
WHITEHOUSE	COMCAST	27
ENTIRE BRAVES TERRITORY (Georgia, Alabama, S. Carolina, Mississippi, Tennessee, western North Carolina)	DIRECTV	617


YOU'RE A BRAVES FAN...
NOW MAKE IT OFFICIAL!
JOIN THE Braves 400 CLUB FOR ONLY $25
THE OFFICIAL FAN CLUB OF THE ATLANTA BRAVES
YOU'LL RECEIVE: *MEMBERSHIP CARD, *400 CLUB DECAL, *BRAVES BUMPER STICKER, *NEWSLETTER, *PARTICIPATE IN SPECIAL EVENTS.
JOIN ON-LINE AT BRAVES400.ORG
OR SEND A CHECK FOR $25 TO:
BRAVES 400 CLUB, P.O. BOX 7689, ATLANTA, GA 30309
More Information at Braves400.org or (770) 416-4539.

PLAYING PEPPER

TIM HUDSON



CARLOS RESTREPO

Hudson, sporting the new alternate jersey and cap, retired the last 19 Nats he faced in the season opener.

INTERVIEW BY
PATTY RASMUSSEN

CHOPTALK: You're 32 years old. How do you feel physically?

TIM HUDSON: (Chuckles) Old!

CT: C'mon, really?

HUDSON: No, physically I feel pretty good. But I can honestly say it does take a little longer for me to recover (from a start) now than when I was 25.

CT: Where do you feel it the most?

HUDSON: Just all over, a few more aches and pains. Rigor mortis, arthritis, I don't know what's setting in! (Laughing) You wake up and don't have the spring in your step that you had when you were younger. Come game time, things are the same. But in between, it takes a little longer to get things going. It's not a big deal. I still feel young for my age. I remember looking around seeing 32-, 33-, 34-year-olds when I first came up, and I hope I'm in better shape than they were, because they looked like they had one foot in the grave!

CT: What did you work on the most during the off-season?

HUDSON: Everything was the same as usual, but this spring training, more than in 2007, I was working on some pitches. I was working on my changeups, my curveball. Last year, I was concentrating on my strength and mechanics, but this year I felt everything was in place and my mechanics were sound enough to start to expand my pitch repertoire. I wanted to get back to that good changeup I was using in Oakland, mixing in a slower breaking ball. I have more confidence in my changeup now than I've had in the last five years.

> "I THINK WE HAVE A REALLY GOOD CHANCE TO QUIETLY KICK SOME PEOPLE'S BUTTS WITHOUT THEM EVEN KNOWING WE'RE COMING."

CT: What's different now? What gives you more confidence?

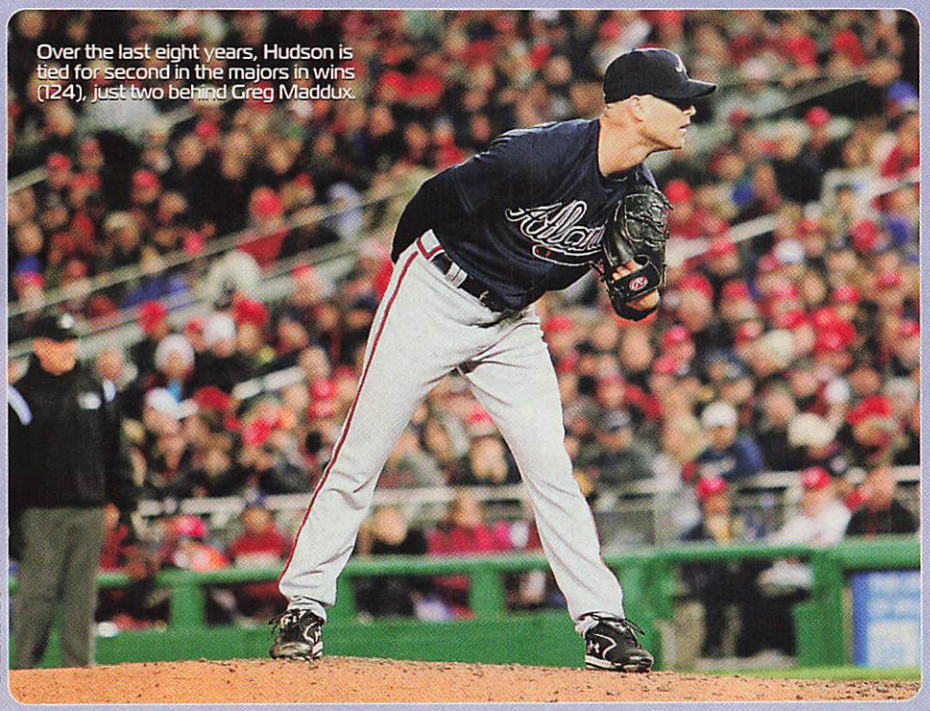
HUDSON: Just being mechanically sound enough to know that I'll be consistent with it. Without that changeup my first few years in Oakland, I can say that I wouldn't have had the success I did early in my career. It was a pitch I could throw at any time in the count and a pitch that I lost confidence in, mainly because of mechanics. But now, I feel really good about it. I didn't throw it a lot in my first start (season opener vs. Washington, no decision in a 3-2 loss), but that was because I needed to keep my pitch count down. My pitch count got so high in the first inning that I wanted to get quick outs. Whenever I'm throwing my changeup well, it's going to be when I'm trying to keep guys off balance and trying to work the count and not be as predictable.

CT: Can you dissect your first inning at Washington (allowed two runs)?

HUDSON: It's crazy, because I really felt great that inning. I felt like I made good pitches. The majority of times for the first pitch of the game, I throw a four-seam (fastball) right down the middle and guys take that pitch. (Christian Guzman) ambushed me the first pitch of the game. He hit it off the end (got a single) and broke his bat. Not a big deal. It happens. But most of the time, guys are going to get out if they swing at the first pitch of the game. I made a bad (pickoff) throw to first base, then I had a guy on third base with no outs. It wasn't exactly the picture perfect way I wanted to start my season. Then I punched out the next two guys. I felt strong the whole inning. I had Nick Johnson at an 0-2 count and felt I made a good pitch on him, threw him a cutter inside, broke his bat, and he blooped it over and got to second. The pitch to Austin Kearns was a good sinker down and away, and he just tried to hit the ball the other way. That's it. I got the next guy out. It's one of those things where you have to give credit where credit is due. They didn't have a lot to work with, but they scrapped and got the most out of what they got. Ideally, I would have gotten out of there with no runs scored. They had some luck on their side.

CT: Did you feel like you took command the rest of the way (retired 19 straight from the last out of the first inning through the seventh inning when he was lifted for a pinch-hitter)? What did you have to change?

HUDSON: Yeah, I knew my pitch count was high. I had 29 in that first inning, so for me to pitch into the fifth inning or deeper in the game, I knew some things had to go our



Over the last eight years, Hudson is tied for second in the majors in wins (124), just two behind Greg Maddux.

CARLOS RESTREPO

way. I tried not to throw pitches for swings and misses. I tried to get the ball in play with three pitches or less. I was able to get good pitches down in the zone. But they kept swinging. If they had been a little more patient, I might not have been able to go five innings, but they were ultra-aggressive. I was able to make quality pitches and get those quick outs. It was a good battle, a nice quick game. I hate that we didn't come out on top.

CT: You're the number-one guy on a starting rotation that includes a couple of guys, John Smoltz and Tom Glavine, who will probably be in the Hall of Fame someday. Does that put any added pressure on you? Any added responsibility? Do you even think about it in that regard?

HUDSON: No, I really don't. I know what they've accomplished in their careers and what they're capable of doing now. But as far as pressure goes, no one expects any more out of me than I do. I go out there and try to win every time. There have been times when I've gone out and pitched and someone will say to me afterward that they thought I pitched really well, but I'll know that I didn't pitch all that great. I expect a lot out of myself, and if I don't live up to what I expect, it's a disappointment. There's always room for improvement, and in every game I know there are things I could have done better, even if we come out with a win.

> "I EXPECT A LOT OUT OF MYSELF, AND IF I DON'T LIVE UP TO WHAT I EXPECT, IT'S A DISAPPOINTMENT. THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT."

CT: Do you like this team's chances this year?

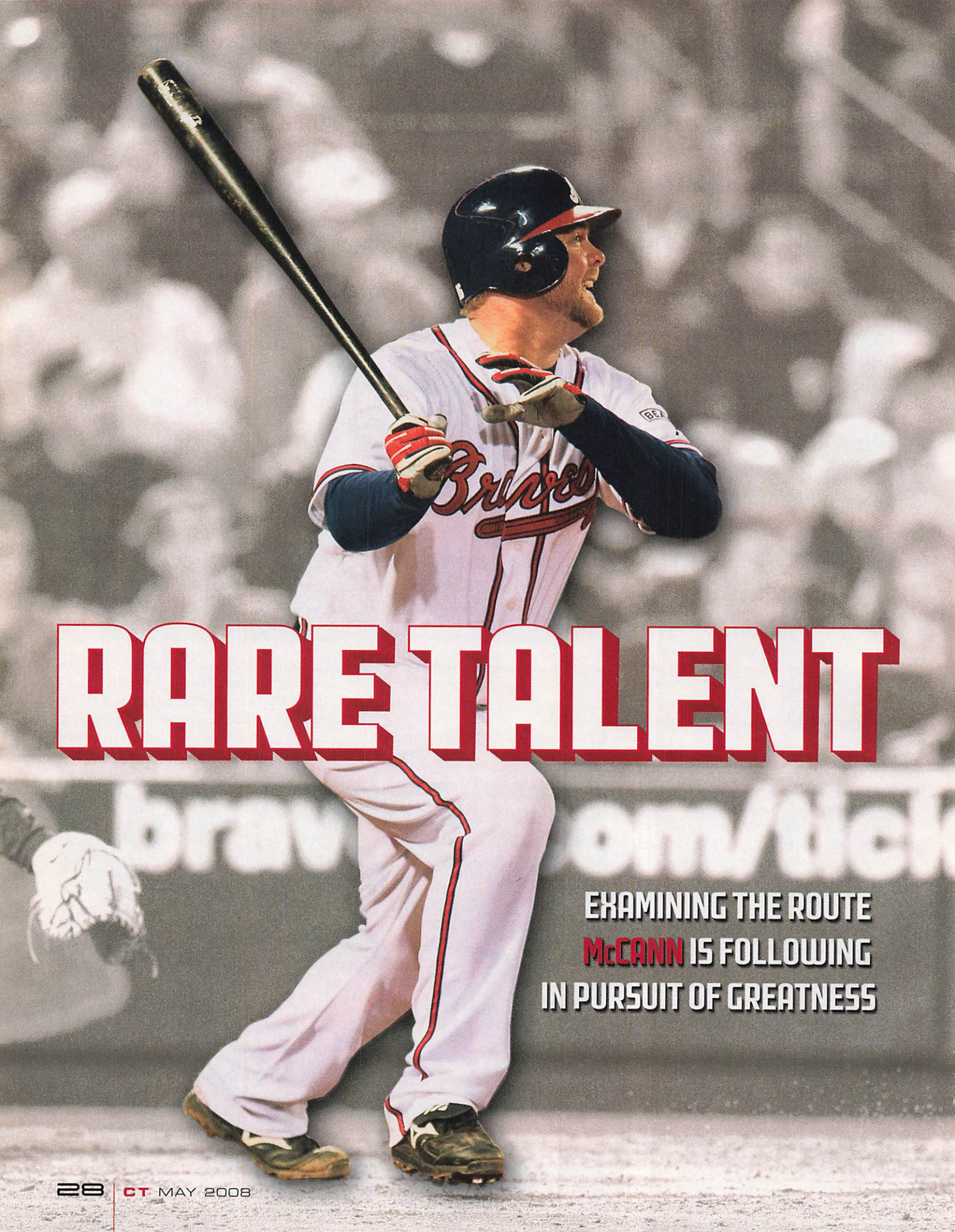
HUDSON: I'll tell you what. This is my fourth year here, and it's, by far, the best team we've had since I've been here. There's a lot of balance. We have some great situational bench guys. I think our bullpen is the best since I've been here. When we get Mike Gonzalez back, it's going to be like a trade. I like our team a lot. I think we'll be tough to deal with for a lot of people.

CT: How do you think it's going to go in the division? What's going to be the key to winning the division?

HUDSON: It's going to come down to head-to-head competition. There's good balance on the teams in the division, and it's going to come down to keeping the key guys on your team healthy. If a Chipper Jones or a Ryan Howard or David Wright goes out for a month, it will significantly hurt their ballclub. It's going to be important to give guys rest whenever you can. But we're pretty deep. We're fortunate to have guys who can give other guys a rest. I think we have a really good chance to quietly kick some people's butts without them even knowing we're coming.

Hudson also is second in ERA (3.53) to Randy Johnson from 2000-07, and he's third in innings to Livan Hernandez and Greg Maddux.

CARLOS RESTREPO



RARE TALENT

EXAMINING THE ROUTE McCANN IS FOLLOWING IN PURSUIT OF GREATNESS

BY JON COOPER

It's been said that still waters run deep.

For the first two-plus seasons of his career, there were no waters more still than those of Brian McCann.

He's the quiet one, the one who punches in, does his work, then punches out - and returns the next day wiser and ready to do it all over again.

At the plate, he lets his bat speak for him, and behind the plate, his maturity and remarkable ability to be on the same wavelength with his pitchers lead to raves from those around him.

McCann entered this season as only the second catcher in major league history to be named an All-Star in each of his first two seasons. The other is Detroit's Ivan "Pudge" Rodriguez.

"We're not even in the same category," said McCann with a laugh when told of his tie to Rodriguez. "He could be the best of all-time, and I've got a lot more to prove."

McCann's modesty notwithstanding, he's actually closer to the 36-year-old Rodriguez than he thinks.

Since the start of 2000, no other National League catcher has hit as high as McCann's .333 average in 2006 (his 442 at-bats didn't qualify him for the batting title). The closest was Javy Lopez's .328 in 2003.

Only three American League catchers in the last eight seasons have batted as high as McCann in 2006 - Rodriguez with Texas in 2000 (.347 in 363 at-bats) and 2004 (.334); Minnesota's Joe Mauer in 2005 (.347); and the Yankees' Jorge Posada in 2006 (.338).

"That's very good company," said Braves bench coach Chino Cadahia. "I also had 'Pudge' at a very young age, and he was more polished behind the plate defensively, but offensively they were both real good players. They're a force with the bat."

McCann has already exerted some of that force on the Braves' record books.

He's the first Braves catcher to put together consecutive 90-RBI seasons, and only one catcher in Braves history had a more productive two-year stretch than McCann's 2006 and '07 seasons, when he drove in 185 runs. That was Joe Torre, who drove in 189 in 1964 and '65.

No other catcher in Braves history hit as high as McCann's .333 in '06. The closest are Ernie Lombardi, who hit .330 in 1942 (he had 11 homers and 46 RBIs), and Lopez in '03 (he hit a catchers' franchise-record 43 homers and drove in 109 runs).

While McCann isn't ready to put himself among the all-time greats, at least one of the Braves' all-time greats believes McCann would fit right in during any era.

"He probably would have done well, because it looks like he swings a good bat," said Braves Hall of Famer Del Crandall (Class of 2003), who was an eight-time All-Star with the Milwaukee Braves from 1953-63). "It looks like he has arm strength, but kids with the right attitude in today's game could play at any time in the history of baseball. So, he probably would do very well.

"Hopefully, he wouldn't have beat me out for my job," Crandall added with a laugh.

Crandall's joke was Johnny Estrada's reality. The Braves traded the 2004 All-Star to Arizona before the 2006 season to make room for McCann. After that season, they made sure that he wasn't leaving anytime soon, signing the then-23-year-old to a six-year contract (the team owns the option for 2018) worth an estimated $27.8 million. Chipper Jones believes fans should ignore the price tag on McCann, because McCann certainly does.

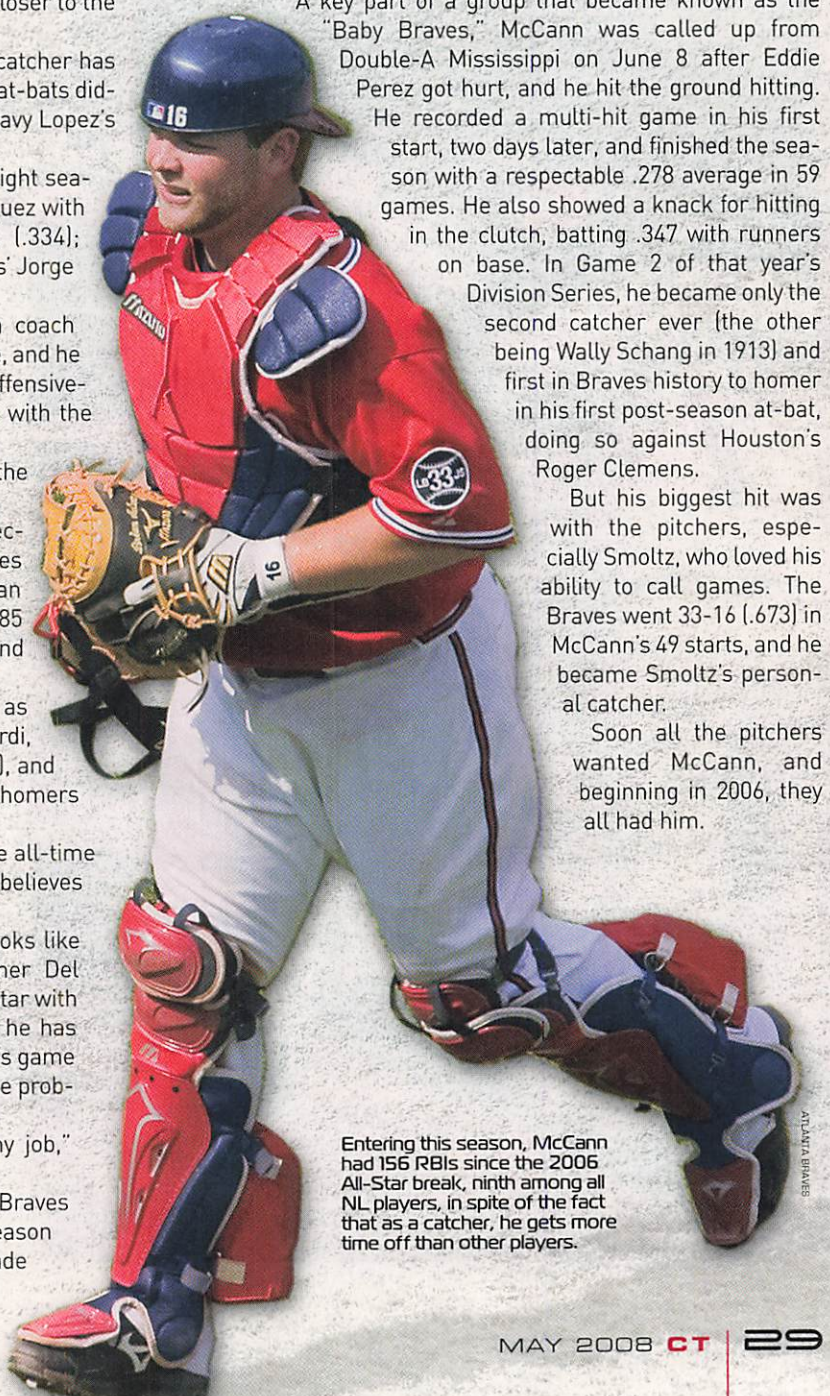
"He's a guy that doesn't play the game for the money," said Jones. "He goes out there and has fun. He is extremely competitive. It doesn't matter if he's paid a dollar or a $100,000 or a $100 million. He's going to be the same kid. That's what everybody loves about him. He's fun-loving and light-hearted in the clubhouse. All the rest of the guys love it."

The love affair began in June of 2005, when, at 21, the Athens, Ga., native, who grew up watching the Braves and has a photograph of himself as a kid taken with John Smoltz, made his major league debut.

A key part of a group that became known as the "Baby Braves," McCann was called up from Double-A Mississippi on June 8 after Eddie Perez got hurt, and he hit the ground hitting. He recorded a multi-hit game in his first start, two days later, and finished the season with a respectable .278 average in 59 games. He also showed a knack for hitting in the clutch, batting .347 with runners on base. In Game 2 of that year's Division Series, he became only the second catcher ever (the other being Wally Schang in 1913) and first in Braves history to homer in his first post-season at-bat, doing so against Houston's Roger Clemens.

But his biggest hit was with the pitchers, especially Smoltz, who loved his ability to call games. The Braves went 33-16 (.673) in McCann's 49 starts, and he became Smoltz's personal catcher.

Soon all the pitchers wanted McCann, and beginning in 2006, they all had him.



Entering this season, McCann had 156 RBIs since the 2006 All-Star break, ninth among all NL players, in spite of the fact that as a catcher, he gets more time off than other players.

PAUL ABELL

ATLANTA BRAVES

In 2006, McCann stepped up his game. He was named a National League All-Star and earned a Silver Slugger by hitting .333, with 24 homers and 93 RBIs. He was the only National League catcher to hit .300 with 20 homers, was third in the NL with 64 RBIs after the All-Star break, had 58 extra-base hits (third-most in a season by a Braves catcher). He also continued his penchant for clutch-hitting, batting .438 with the bases loaded, .346 with runners in scoring position, and .471 with runners in scoring position and two out. He even tied a franchise record with homers in five consecutive games.

In 2007, McCann again was named an All-Star, finished third on the team with 92 RBIs, was second on the team with 41 two-out RBIs, and hit a career-best 38 doubles. Only his .270 average was a notable decline from the previous year.

"What I did in '06, I probably reached as high as I'm going to reach hitting-wise, so last year was a positive year," he said. "Obviously my average wasn't where I wanted it to be, but my power numbers were there for my position, and I was happy."

Of course, one man's trash can be another's treasure, and talk of McCann's struggles at the plate would lead Tom Glavine to ask, "What struggles?"

"I know facing him over the last two years, even though he's a lefthander, I never felt like I had a huge advantage simply because he was left-handed," said Glavine, against whom McCann hit a respectable .278, with three doubles and an RBI. "I knew he was going to battle me, and it was going to be tough to get him out. Most times he's not going to get himself out. He's going to make you make good pitches."

Then there is McCann, the receiver.

"He's very mature for his age, and he's very mature for his age in this game," Glavine said. "It's nice having a guy behind the plate who is on the same page with you and is thinking along with you."

Glavine is learning now what other Braves pitchers already know.

"I remember the first time I threw a bullpen to him. It was in the Instructional League in '02, and it was his first Instructional League," recalled Blaine Boyer, a friend and teammate of McCann since 2003. "The first time I threw to him, I was like, 'Man, that was awesome.' Because he's a big target, just sucks the ball in. Gosh, it was such a breath of fresh air being able to throw to him, because we were used to guys that don't really think all that much sometimes. But him being such a good receiver and also being able to think, he's got a plan up there. It's just a big confidence booster."

"We have some tough lineups in our division," added Tim Hudson. "To be able to handle some of those line-

McCann and boyhood friend Jeff Francoeur have been congratulating each other for a long time, and on April 12, they hit back-to-back home runs on consecutive pitches.

PAUL ABELL

FRANCHISE FEATS

SILVER SLUGGER CATCHERS

2003	JAVY LOPEZ	(AGE 32)
2004	JOHNNY ESTRADA	(28)
2006	BRIAN McCANN	(22)

ALL-STAR CATCHERS

1946-48	PHIL MASI	(AGE, FIRST SELECTION 30)
1950	WALKER COOPER	(35)
1953-56, '58-60, '62	DEL CRANDALL	(23)
1963-67	JOE TORRE	(23)
1978	BIFF POCOROBA	(24)
1981, '83	BRUCE BENEDICT	(25)
1987	OZZIE VIRGIL	(30)
1990	GREG OLSON	(29)
1997-98, '03	JAVY LOPEZ	(26)
2004	JOHNNY ESTRADA	(28)
2006-07	BRIAN McCANN	(22)

ups, day in and day out, and do pretty well against them, it's pretty remarkable. You're talking about the Phillies' lineup and the Mets' lineup. Throughout a game, you have to flip their lineup over three and four times. You've got to be creative and not stick to patterns. He's done a good job of that."

About the only problem McCann faced last season was throwing out basestealers, catching only 17 of 87 runners. Once rated the top defensive catcher in the Carolina League by Baseball America, he's stopped thinking about the problem, an approach he hopes will go a long way in solving it.

"I've been thinking too much about mechanics and trying to be perfect with everything," he said. "I'm going to just try to get the ball to second base. That will be the only thing that's going to be on my mind."

What's on his mind is becoming more and more important every day as he continues to grow in stature among National League catchers, and in the Braves' clubhouse.

"Because of the position that he plays, he's going to garner instant respect from his teammates," said Jones. "Whenever he stands up in a meeting and opens his mouth, he's going to be like E.F. Hutton. People are going to stop and listen to him. If B-Mac feels strongly enough to say something in front of the whole crowd, you can bet it's pretty important."

Francoeur also has noticed a big difference in McCann's maturity.

"He doesn't really worry about little things getting to him like he used to," he said. "He's matured, and he's going to continue to be one of the best catchers in baseball."

"You look at the top catchers in the game, guys like Russell Martin and Jorge Posada and those guys, and they're top defensive and offensive catchers. He wants to be in that," added Francoeur. "I know he's disappointed in how many guys he threw out last year, and he wants to try to double that. I don't see any reason he can't."

As McCann, just 24, grows into a role as a team leader, it appears that he is on the way to getting his house in order. That's also true off the field.

He took a big step in that regard in December, when he married his high school sweetheart, the former Ashley Jarusinski.

"I think it's been great for him," said Francoeur, his former roommate. "It's someone to keep him in line so he's not as messy anymore. I would clean up the house - now his wife can."

RUBEN GOTAY

I APPROACH MY ROLE BY KEEPING IT SIMPLE

IT WAS DISAPPOINTING to find out that the Mets released me, because I felt I played well for them last year and that I earned a spot on the team this year. Even though I was on waivers for only a day, it felt like much longer. I was glad the Braves picked me up, though, because they are a good team, a team that knows how to win.

To hear that Tom Glavine said I will "battle" is a compliment because of who he is and how long he has played the game. I think I'm a battler in the way I play the game, because I think that I am giving 100 percent all the time. I want to get good at-bats, put the ball in play, and give myself a chance to do something that will help the team win. I've always had good plate discipline, but it's also something I've developed through the years as I got confidence in what I could do. I always try to have a plan when I'm going to the plate. When you're an everyday player, you have a different approach than when you're a pinch-hitter. As an everyday player, I would go to the plate looking for a pitch I could handle. But as a pinch-hitter, I look for the fastball.

I know that my ability to play a bunch of positions helps me, because it makes me more valuable to teams who want defensive backup and someone who can hit. When I was a kid, I played shortstop, then moved over to second base, then third base. But to me, the infield is the infield.

The hardest position for me is probably third base, because the ball comes at you a little quicker. But I've played all the positions so much that I feel confident wherever they put me. I think my favorite spot is playing second base.

> "I'VE PLAYED ALL THE (INFIELD) POSITIONS SO MUCH THAT I FEEL CONFIDENT WHEREVER THEY PUT ME."

Staying sharp is so important for a bench player. When you're in the game every day, you get into a rhythm, but it's so different when you don't know the next time you'll get in a game.

The way I handle it is to keep everything as simple as possible. After I hit during batting practice, I don't hit again in the cages, not even during the game. When you're hitting in batting practice, you get used to the quickness of the pitches from live pitching. A machine doesn't compare, and I don't want to confuse my swing.

During the game, I might go in and ride the bike for about five minutes, then take a couple of swings in the air, but not in batting cages.

To stay in the game mentally, I just have to watch the game, watch the pitchers, and talk to other players about the relief pitchers that will probably come in. I just don't want to think too much or get too much in my head. Keeping things simple is the way for me to approach my role.

I was definitely influenced by my father, who played minor league baseball. My father watches my game and told me the good things and the bad things he saw in my game. He encouraged me to know myself and my game. My dad lives in Puerto Rico and watches my games on television.

When I was growing up in Puerto Rico, my favorite player was Roberto Alomar, but my favorite team was the Atlanta Braves. I was born in 1982, so I was a little kid when they had all those great teams that went to the World Series and won the National League.

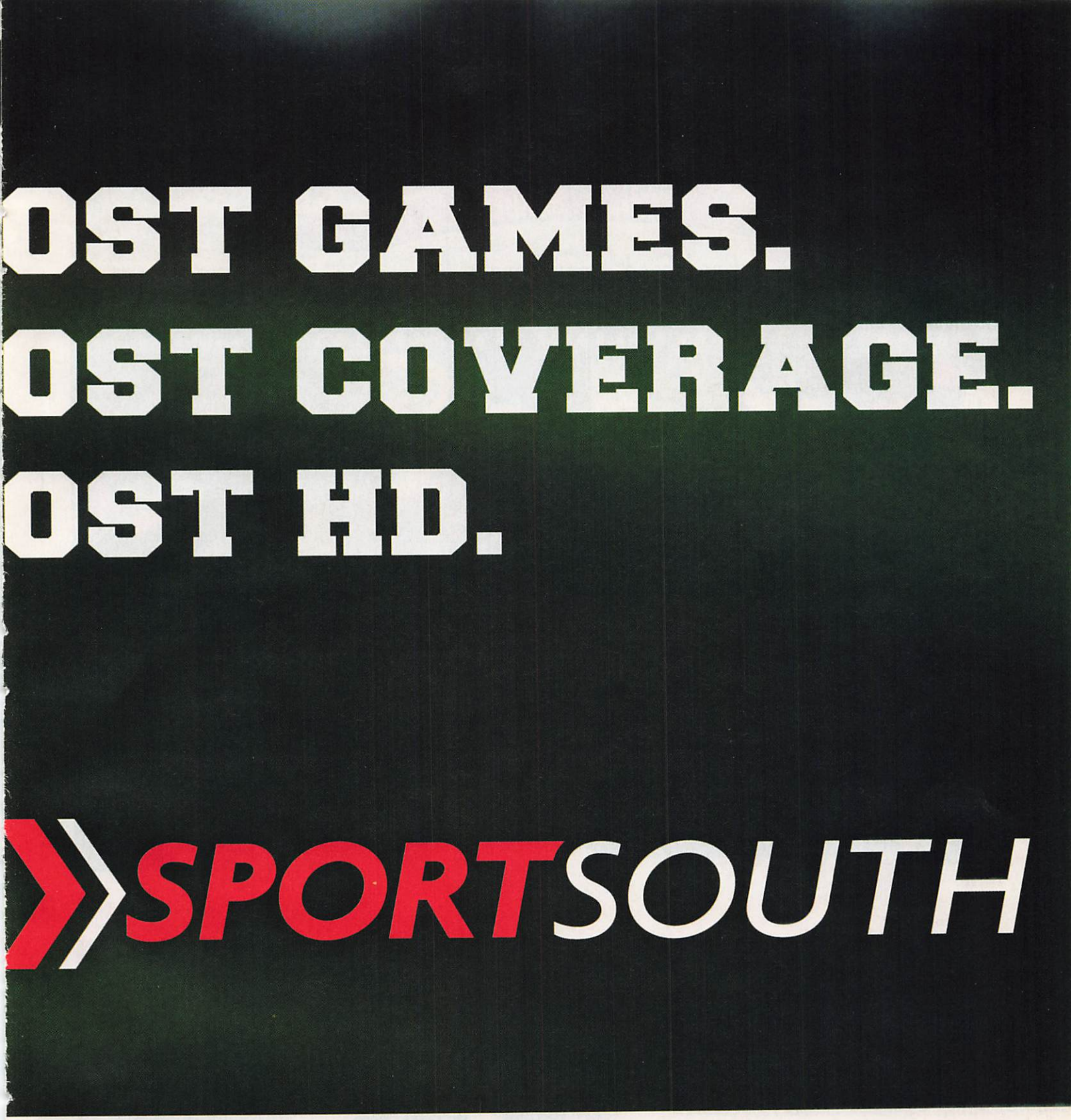
I played with Matt Diaz in Kansas City in 2005. I had a great spring training that year. I was trying so hard to make the team. I hit .350 and had 7 or 8 home runs. The guys called me "Ruben Bonds." But I made the team. It was great.

dish NETWORK®

FSN ch.420 | SPSO ch.437

DIR

FSN ch.630



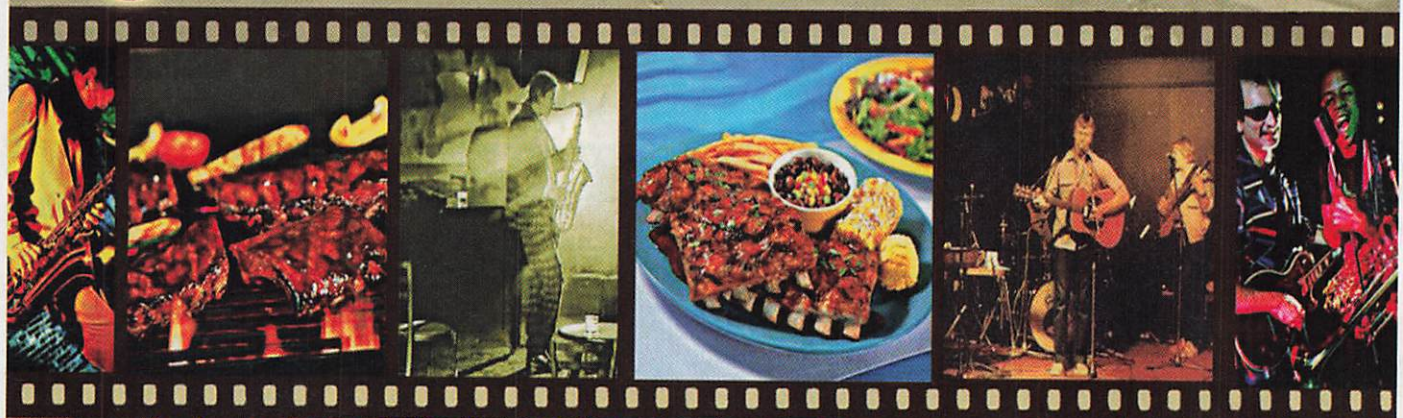
ECTV®
| SPSO ch.631

comcast®
FSN ch.48 | SPSO ch.53 | HD ch.848
in metro Atlanta

Bullpen BARBEQUE

Good Food. Good Times

South West Gate of **Turner Field**
735 Pollard BLVD • Atlanta, GA 30315
For more information: **404-577-5774**



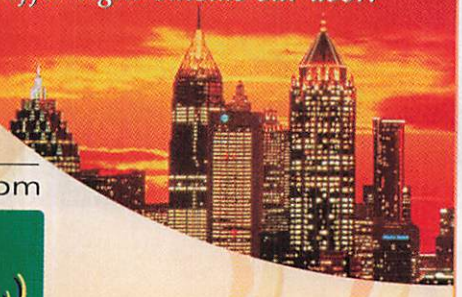
LIVE BLUES & KILLER RIBS

Every Friday & Saturday
7:30P.M - 11:30P.M

QUALITY

HOTEL DOWNTOWN ATLANTA
89 Luckie Street Atlanta, Ga. 30303

We invite you to enjoy all Atlanta has to offer-right outside our door!



Special Game Day Rates Starting At $59 AND UP

- Complimentary Continental Breakfast Bar
- Convenient to Braves MARTA Shuttle at Five Points Station
- 5 Minute Drive to Turner Field

404.524.7991

www.choicehotels.com

QUALITY

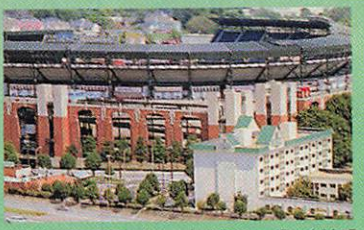
FOR GROUP RATES CALL OUR SALES DEPARTMENT AT **678.420.6441**

NOW OPEN

A cozy stay at a comfortable price®

COUNTRY INN & SUITES BY CARLSON

Across the Street from Home Plate Entrance!



759 Pollard Boulevard, Atlanta, Ga. 30315

404.658.1961 800.456.4000

www.countryinns.com

- Complimentary High-Speed-Wireless Internet Access
- Complimentary Deluxe Breakfast Bar
- Parking Included with Each Room
- Sparkling Clean New Rooms/Suites
- Bullpen Bar & Grill Next Door

Comfort INN

City Center at Turner Field

Comfort INN®

- 30 FEET FROM THE S.W. GATE!
- FREE GUEST PARKING
- COMPLIMENTARY, DELUXE CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST BAR

If location is everything,
we have everything you need on game day

404.658.1610

FOR GROUP RATES
CALL OUR SALES DEPT.
AT 404.658.1610

COMFORT INN CITY CENTER AT TURNER FIELD 795 POLLARD BLVD. ATLANTA, GA. 30315

JURRJENS BY PAUL ABELL; KOTASY AND OHMAN COURTESY OF THE ATLANTA BRAVES

NO SMALL CHANGE

IF THE ROSTER LOOKS A BIT DIFFERENT, THAT'S BECAUSE IT IS - 60 PERCENT DIFFERENT

BY PATTY RASMUSSEN

CHANGE IS INEVITABLE, and with a 60 percent turnover from the Opening Day roster of 2007 to 2008, the Braves are certainly hoping that their changes are also for the better. Of the 25 players on the team's 2008 Opening Day roster, only 10 were on the Opening Day roster a year ago. The other 15 players began the 2007 season either in the Braves' farm system or in another organization.

"We've averaged about 40 percent (roster) change over the past 15 years," said general manager Frank Wren, who spent the off-season acquiring players via trades and well-timed waiver pickups. "Our roster had been getting older, so it's only natural that we're going to start seeing more change. More important than the percentage of change is how the pieces fit."

Among the 15 first-timers on the Opening day roster, three players spent significant blocks of time with Atlanta last season. Peter Moylan, 29, and Yunel Escobar, 25, were called up to replace injured players early in the 2007 season and remained with the club the rest of the year. Mark Teixeira, 28, joined the team at the end of July when he and Ron Mahay, now with Kansas City, were acquired in exchange for Jarrod Saltalamacchia and four minor league prospects.

Several other players who made the Opening Day roster also saw action in Atlanta last season.

Manny Acosta, 27, was recalled from Richmond on Aug. 10, and made 21 relief appearances over the remainder of the season. Acosta, a quiet, lanky righthander from Panama, originally signed with the Yankees in 1998, and was picked up as a minor league free agent by the Braves in 2003.

"I think of myself as a smart pitcher," said Acosta. "I pay attention to details and know when to throw like a power pitcher and when to use finesse pitches."

Acosta made his way through the Braves' farm system, culminating with a terrific 2007 at Richmond, where he was named the Pitcher of the Year, leading the team with nine wins and 12 saves. His versatility made him an attractive addition to the bullpen.

"I am open to the call of the manager," said Acosta. "I've played every role in pitching, long relief, facing one hitter, even starting."

Like Braves closer Rafael Soriano, Acosta is known for his intense, almost blank, game-face stare.

"Sometimes you have to put on a face so the batters don't think you're nervous," said Acosta. "But I also am always concentrating when I'm on the mound."

Another righthander, 27-year-old Jeff Bennett, found himself on the Opening Day roster after making two spot starts and one

relief appearance for the Braves last September. Bennett, who shed 40 pounds since last July through diet and exercise, remade his physique during the off-season, and is coveted by Bobby Cox for his long relief ability.

Corky Miller began last season at Richmond but came to Atlanta in August, starting as catcher in six games, and playing in a total of 12. The 32-year-old veteran brought much-needed experience to the backup catcher spot.

Atlanta area native Blaine Boyer was out of options and thus likely would have been lost had he not made the Opening Day roster. Boyer, 27, pitched 73 innings at Richmond last season, finishing with a 4-3 record and a 4.30 ERA. Cox believes the righty will figure into the late-innings mix with Moylan and Acosta.

Backup second baseman Martin Prado, 25, made four trips between Richmond and Atlanta in '07 and finally remained as a September callup. His defense is his hallmark and on Sept. 10, against the Mets, Prado had 11 assists, the most for a Braves second baseman since 1985, when current first base coach Glenn Hubbard had 12 against San Diego. Prado capably filled in during the first week of the 2008 season when starter Kelly Johnson missed three games with a sore knee.

Acquired by the Braves from San Diego at last year's trade deadline, reliever Royce Ring, 27, pitched 12 innings at Richmond and earned one save before arriving in Atlanta at the beginning of September. A lefty, Ring held hitters scoreless in 11 appearances, giving up just two hits while striking out four. Ring's considered a situational reliever who specializes in retiring lefties.

Gregor Blanco, 25, grew up in the Braves farm system. He played at Richmond a year ago, leading the International League with 81 runs scored and leading the team in at-bats (464), runs (81), hits (131), triples (5) and walks (63). He beat out Josh Anderson for the backup outfielder's spot and admitted he's had to make adjustments to playing in a new venue.

"It was good for me to play winter ball in Venezuela, because we have big crowds in the stands," he said. "It helped me get used to the large crowds."

Blanco is also adjusting to being a bench player versus playing every day.

"I'm working on staying loose with (strength and conditioning coach) Frank Fultz and Terry Pendleton, just trying to be ready whenever I get a chance to play," said Blanco. "Around the fifth inning, I go inside to the cages and loosen up my swing, do some running to be ready for whatever the manager needs - pinch-hit, baserunning, or playing in the outfield."

Blanco said he's learned a lot from watching the game on the bench.

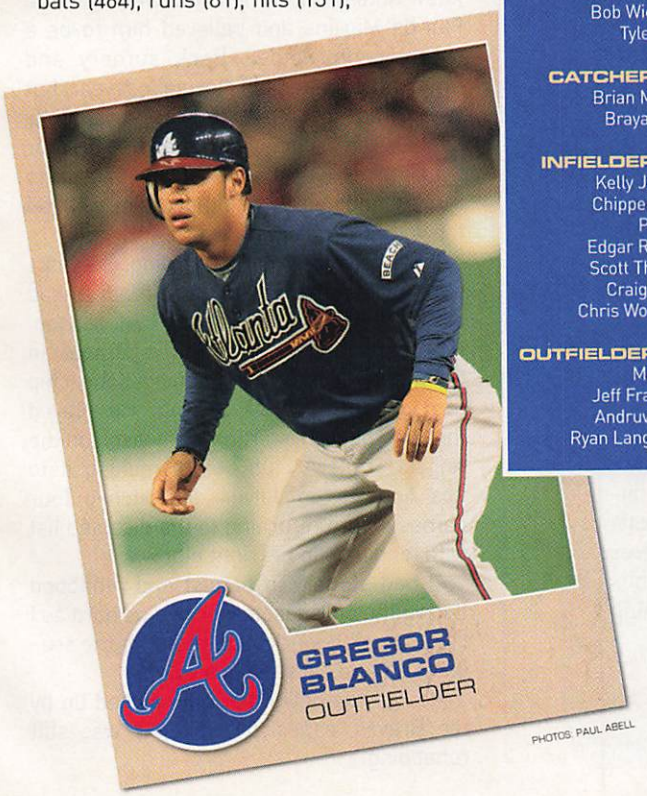
"I want to learn the most I can from the bench, and you can learn a lot if you pay attention to the game," he said. "I want to see what the pitcher has so I'll be ready to get in there."

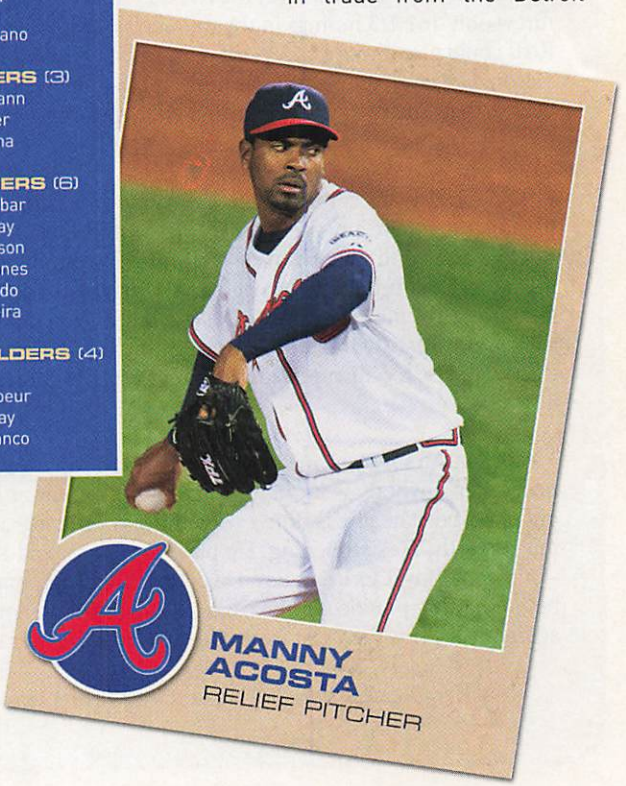
Finally, there are players who weren't with the club at all in 2007, though one was certainly well-known to Braves fans. The team welcomed back 303-game winner Tom Glavine, 42, who spent the first 18 years of his career with the Braves and spent the last five seasons with the Mets. Glavine re-signed as a free agent in November and was the starter for the home opener on Mar. 31.

Also from the Mets, the Braves picked up Ruben Gotay, 26, a versatile utility infielder, claimed off waivers at the end of spring training. Gotay played 94 games for the Mets in 2007.

Right-handed starter Jair Jurrjens, 22, was acquired, along with Gorkys Hernandez, in trade from the Detroit

2007 OPENING DAY ROSTER	2008 OPENING DAY ROSTER
PITCHERS (12)	**PITCHERS (12)**
Lance Cormier	Manny Acosta
Mike Gonzalez	Jeff Bennett
Tim Hudson	Blaine Boyer
Chuck James	Tom Glavine
Macay McBride	Mike Hampton
Chad Paronto	Tim Hudson
Mark Redman	Jair Jurrjens
John Smoltz	Peter Moylan
Rafael Soriano	Will Ohman
Oscar Villarreal	Chris Resop
Bob Wickman,	Royce Ring
Tyler Yates	Rafael Soriano
CATCHERS (2)	**CATCHERS (3)**
Brian McCann	Brian McCann
Brayan Pena	Corky Miller
	Brayan Pena
INFIELDERS (7)	**INFIELDERS (6)**
Kelly Johnson	Yunel Escobar
Chipper Jones	Ruben Gotay
Pete Orr	Kelly Johnson
Edgar Renteria	Chipper Jones
Scott Thorman	Martin Prado
Craig Wilson	Mark Teixeira
Chris Woodward	
OUTFIELDERS (4)	**OUTFIELDERS (4)**
Matt Diaz	Matt Diaz
Jeff Francoeur	Jeff Francoeur
Andruw Jones	Mark Kotsay
Ryan Langerhans	Gregor Blanco





PHOTOS: PAUL ABELL

BY KEN ROSENTHAL

ANDRUW'S SLOW START UNDER ASSAULT IN L.A.

THE EARLY LEADING CANDIDATE for worst free-agent signing: **Andruw Jones**, two years, $36.2 million – and a seventh-place hitter 10 games into the season for a mediocre offensive club. Jones got off to a 4-for-40 (.100) start, and his weight was such an issue that a columnist for the Los Angeles Times referred to him as "tubbo." **Juan Pierre**, **Andre Ethier** and **Matt Kemp** all were more deserving of playing time than Jones, but Andruw's salary is too high for him to get benched. Crowds at Dodger Stadium were booing him heavily.

AB

For Barry Bonds and other unsigned 40-something veterans - catcher **Mike Piazza**, outfielder **Kenny Lofton** and lefthander **David Wells** - the question is how long they will continue to work out. Someone like Wells probably will shut it down at the end of April, but Bonds' agent, **Jeff Borris**, says that Bonds stays in shape year-round and presumably would be ready if a team needs him in July or August.

AB

Padres general manager **Kevin Towers** views outfielder **Scott Hairston** as a player similar to former Brave **Ron Gant** in his prime – lots of strikeouts, lots of power. Hairston is a good fit for Petco Park – his home runs aren't fence-scrapers, they travel a good distance. Towers believes that over a full season, Hairston could hit .250 to .270 with 20 homers, steal 20 bases, and contribute 70 to 100 RBIs.

AB

Cincinnati righthander **Johnny Cueto** looks like a star, raising the question of whether the Reds will limit the rookie's workload. Cueto is just 22, and he threw only 161 1/3 innings in the minors last season. It's conceivable that the Reds could give him extra days off or even skip him in the rotation later in the season. However, the Reds make no secret that they're trying to win, and they believe that Cueto's delivery is sound enough for him to hold up.

AB

The Orioles are coming back to reality, which means they can resume planning for their July fire sale. The Cubs still want **Brian Roberts**, and the Rockies also could pursue the switch-hitting second baseman – particularly if **Jason Nix** continues to struggle offensively. The Indians explored trading for Roberts in the off-season, but such a deal would have required them to move **Asdrubal Cabrera** to short and **Jhonny Peralta** to third – a shuffle that would be too disruptive for them to pull off in the middle of a season.

AB

Morgan Ensberg, a first-year Yankee, says of **Alex Rodriguez**, "I have never seen anybody work harder than him. You never hear that. I was flat-out shocked. The guy is doing something productive at all times. He's eating correctly. He's stretching. He plays long-toss, and I'm talking long-toss – 300-foot long-toss every day. He takes a full round of groundballs. He hits before batting practice in the cage. At 2 o'clock, the guy is out there doing agility drills. It is the most incredible thing I have ever seen."

- KEN ROSENTHAL IS A SENIOR WRITER FOR FOXSPORTS.COM

Tigers for Edgar Renteria last October. A native of Curacao, Jurrjens is the first pitcher to make the major leagues from the island nation that is also the home of Andruw Jones. Jurrjens spent most of 2007 playing for the Tiger's Double-A team before his callup in mid-August. He finished with a 3-1 record at Detroit, opening eyes around the major leagues.

Jurrjens didn't disappoint during spring training where he impressed with his poise, confidence and effectiveness.

"I like to attack hitters," he said. "If you try to be perfect, there's a chance you'll fall behind and the hitter can get ahead and get comfortable facing you. When you're attacking them, they have to go in defense mode, and you have a better chance of getting them out."

Jurrjens throws a fastball, circle change and slider.

"I just like to keep the hitters off balance," he said. "I want to get the groundball and fly-outs and not have to throw a lot of pitches."

Will Ohman, 31, a left-handed reliever, was acquired, along with injured infielder Omar Infante, in a trade with the Cubs in December. Ohman spent most of 2007 with the Cubs (4.95 ERA in 56 relief outings). In 2006, the sturdy Ohman pitched in a career-high 78 games.

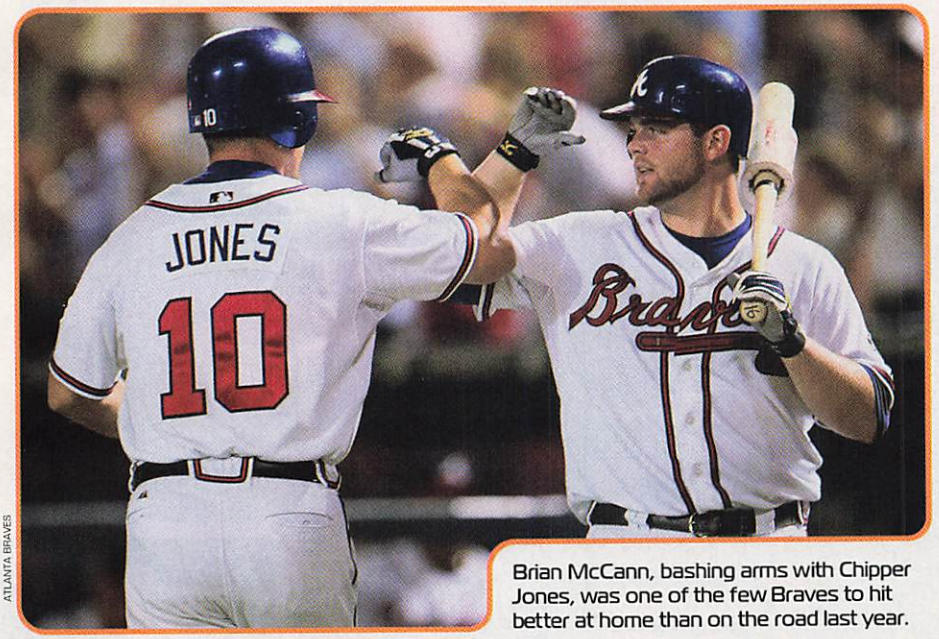
Mark Kotsay, formerly with the Oakland A's, was acquired by trade (for Joey Devine and Jamie Richmond) in December. Wren knew Kotsay from when both were with the Florida Marlins and believed him to be a sound centerfielder. Back surgery and rehab time limited his playing last year, but Wren was assured that Kotsay had fully healed. His willingness to leap and dive for flyballs, along with his strong, accurate throws, and line-drive hitting quickly stilled the voices of most naysayers.

Chris Resop, a hard-throwing, 25-year-old right-handed reliever, is already ahead of where he was this time last season. Picked up off waivers by the Braves in October, Resop had a nagging bone chip throughout the 2007 season. He played through the pain, starting the season on the Angels Triple-A club before making it to Los Angeles on July 4. He pitched four games before returning to the disabled list with tendinitis in his right elbow.

"I had surgery in August and rehabbed during the off-season, working as hard as I could possibly work to be ready for the season," he said. "It's really paid off."

Resop was delighted to be picked up by the Braves, especially while he was still rehabbing.

MORE RUNS AT TURNER FIELD ARE A MUST



ATLANTA BRAVES

Brian McCann, bashing arms with Chipper Jones, was one of the few Braves to hit better at home than on the road last year.

BY STEVE FALL

DURING THEIR RUN of 14 straight division titles, the Braves dominated opponents at home. From 1991 through 2005, they posted a sensational .630 winning percentage in home games. But in 2006 and 2007 combined, they went just 84-78 (.519) at Turner Field. Getting that edge back at home could propel this team into the post-season.

While the Braves also had a tougher time winning on the road during the past two seasons (.488) than from 1991-05 (.582), the dropoff wasn't as great as at home. Successful teams usually play close to .500 ball on the road, but win at least 60 percent of their home games. Last season, three of the eight playoff clubs failed to reach the .500 mark in road games. So, the Braves can make the post-season with minimal improvement in road performance, but they must upgrade their play at Turner Field.

To become a dominant home team, the Braves' hitting must improve. Last year, they scored 56 fewer runs in home games (377) than in road games (433). Only two NL teams had a greater differential, but both the Mets (-70) and Padres (-95) play in tough parks for hitters. Turner Field favors neither pitchers nor hitters to a great extent, which makes Atlanta's discrepancy even more mysterious.

The Braves' biggest problem was not generating any runs in too many home games. They got shut out in their own park eight times, and held to one run in eight other games. Not surprisingly, they lost all 16 of those games. On the road, Atlanta was shut out just two times and held to one run on five occasions.

Nearly all the Braves hit better on the road than at home last year. Among the seven players that remain with the club who had at least 100 plate appearances in both home and road games, only Brian McCann posted a significantly higher average (.294 vs. .250) at Turner Field. Both Matt Diaz and Yunel Escobar had slightly higher home figures. The same holds true for on-base plus slugging percentage (OPS). Again only McCann (.801 vs. .748) had a substantially higher figure at home.

Aside from two players with slightly better totals, all the returning Braves showed less power at home. Mark Teixeira hit nine of his 17 NL home runs at Turner Field. Escobar had three of his five at home. The player with the most favorable breakdown – Andruw Jones – now wears a Dodgers uniform. He had 16 of his 26 home runs at home. Otherwise, Jones couldn't buy a hit in Atlanta. He posted a .196 home batting average.

Perhaps the home opener is a sign that the offensive woes at Turner Field have ended. The Braves rolled up 11 runs, but lost a 12-11 extra innings thriller to Pittsburgh. Last season, the club didn't score 11 or more runs at home until June 27.

BOBBY COX enters this season with 2,255 career victories. Only three managers in the history of baseball have won more. Statistics from the The Bill James Handbook 2008 provide some insight into his managerial style.

Cox used 86 different lineups in 2007, fewer than any of the other 13 season-long NL managers. Despite going predominantly with a set lineup, Cox gave his players the platoon advantage against the starting pitcher 68 percent of the time. In other words, he usually had right-handed batters facing lefties or left-handed batters going up against righties. Only the Giants' Bruce Bochy (73 percent) topped Cox in platooning, and Cox easily beat the NL average of 58 percent.

The Braves' manager also used more pinch-hitters (290) than all but two other NL managers. Only Tony La Russa (317) and Manny Acta (295) sent up more. Cox has used pinch-hitters extensively for the past several years. They help him gain the platoon advantage and keep his bench fresh.

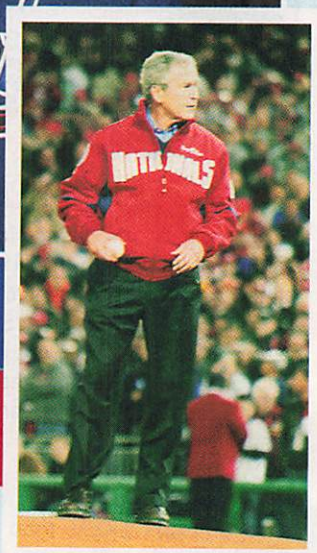
Cox ordered fewer stolen base attempts (94) and sacrifice bunts (77) than most other managers in 2007. While some critics characterize Cox as a station-to-station, play-for-the-big-inning manager, he will use these strategies when he has the right personnel. In 2000, when his roster featured speedsters like Rafael Furcal and Quilvio Veras, he led all NL managers in attempted steals (204) and sacrifices (109).

Cox led all NL managers in intentional walks issued (89) last year. Nobody else came close. That surpassed the next closest manager (Charlie Manuel) by 27. This also shows how he's adapted to his roster. Back in 1998-99, when he had a sensational starting rotation, Cox ordered just 63 intentional passes in two seasons.

The numbers show that Cox's style is more distinctive and extreme than other managers. If he has the personnel to take advantage of a certain strategy, he'll use it as much as possible. When that's not the case, he has no problem avoiding it almost entirely.

Not only did President Bush throw out the first pitch at new Nationals Park (inset), but he also paid a visit to the Braves' clubhouse where he received a new blue alternate jersey and warmup from Jeff Francoeur and Chipper Jones.

MITCHELL LAYTON



CARLOS RESTREPO

Capital Encounter

Presidential Visit, New Stadium, Blue Uniforms Make For Unique Season Opener

BY MELANIE D.G. KAPLAN

CHRIS LANZARONE hasn't missed a Braves game in Washington for as long as he can remember, and he wasn't about to miss Opening Night at a shiny new stadium just because the weather felt more like the post-season.

"I've got five layers," said the 22-year-year old Fredericksburg, Va., resident, showing off his Braves jacket, sweatshirt and long-sleeve t-shirt.

Lanzarone, who was born in Columbus, Ga., wore an Atlanta cap, held a foam tomahawk, and spent several hours before game time behind the Braves' dugout, trying to get autographs and trying to stay warm.

The Washington Nationals hosted the Braves on Mar. 30 for the inaugural regular-season game at the franchise's new home, Nationals Park. And despite temperatures starting at 49 (that seemed to fall with each inning), the night brought out the best in baseball - a great game, a million-dollar field, and some heavy-hitter fans.

The gates opened four and a half hours before the first pitch of the season's first game in North America, and thousands of fans entered the stadium on a long, wide red carpet, below arches of red, white and blue balloons.

Thanks to President George W. Bush's imminent arrival, security was tight, with metal detectors, sniffing dogs and Secret Service lurking around every corner. But once fans were inside, after they received free curly "W" lanyards and "Welcome Home" rally towels, it was difficult for them not to be awed by the ballpark - where the Braves will play nine games this season.

Located in a formerly neglected section of Washington, Nationals Park is a glorious concrete, metal and glass structure located on the banks of the Anacostia River. It is a far cry from RFK Stadium, a few miles northeast, where the Nats played the past three seasons. Forty-seven-year-old RFK was built for football but has recently been shared between the Nationals and soccer team D.C. United.

"It's night and day from RFK," said Jeff Francoeur. "It'll be fun to come here and play. It makes me happy for [the Nationals] that they have a nice place to play now. It's everything I expected and more."

William Young, 14, of Arlington, Va., said he was a fan of Nationals Park long before the game began. "It's so much better than RFK," he said. "The grass there was always torn up from soccer."

Young, whose father (Under Secretary of Defense John Young) grew up near Atlanta in Moreland, had front-row seats and was hoping to get autographs in his binder of Braves photos. Last season at RFK, Francoeur signed Young's jersey, which the fan says is now framed in his basement.

The new 41,888-seat, $611-million ballpark has a wide concourse with an almost complete 360-degree open view of the playing field, so fans can buy burgers and dogs without missing a pitch. Nationals Park has more than six times as much space for restaurants as RFK and includes local favorite Ben's Chili Bowl and the Red Porch Restaurant.

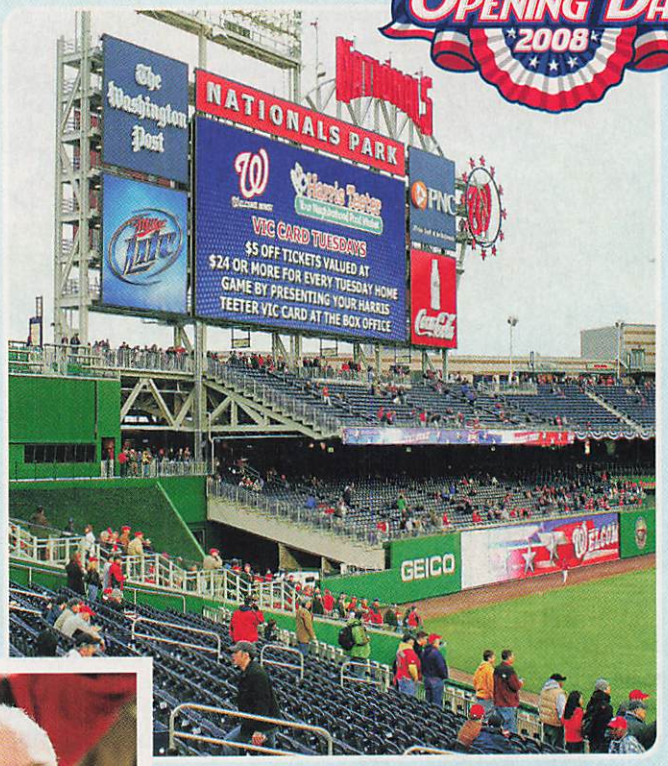
There are three team stores and a kids' entertainment center - including the Sony Playstation Pavilion, Build-a-Bear workshop, SingStar Stage karaoke station, Batters Up batting cage, Now Pitching pitchers cage, a jungle gym and a playground. At the Geico Photo Area, kids can have their pictures taken with the Nationals' Racing Presidents.

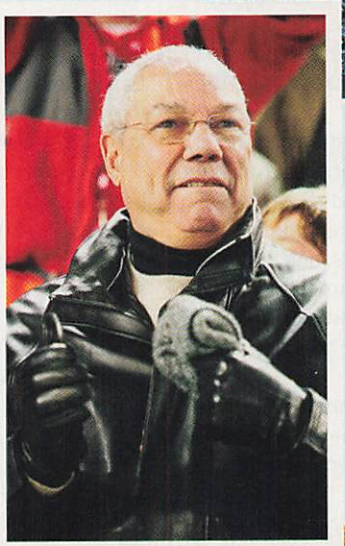
The scoreboard - 102 feet wide and 47 feet tall - is more than three times larger than the board at RFK, and the baseline seats are up to 17 feet closer to the infield than at RFK. The Washington Post described RFK's home clubhouse "the size of a small kitchen" and the home clubhouse at Nationals Park "the size of a small state."

"They've done a masterful job here," said Major League Baseball Commissioner Bud Selig. "I always joke that some days are not all that fun being the commissioner of baseball. But then, there's days like this that are rewarding and satisfying. I'm really proud to be part of this."

Selig called the ballpark "a cathedral" and added, "The thing that was so impressive in the '50s and '60s is that stadiums had characteristics that made them unique. That's what I like about this."

"It's very appealing and has great sightlines," said Braves president John Schuerholz, who was at the ballpark with team chairman and CEO Terry McGuirk and chairman emeritus Bill Bartholomay.

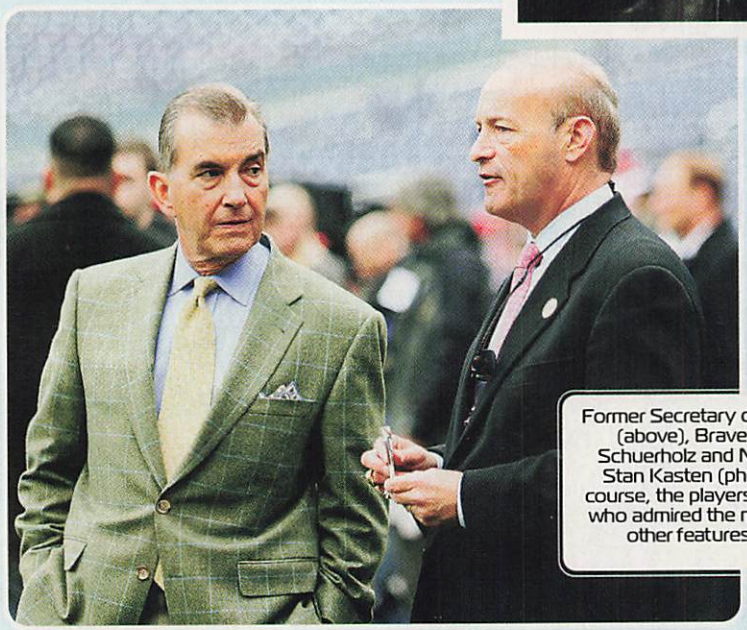

The Washington Post
NATIONALS PARK
VIC CARD TUESDAYS
$5 OFF TICKETS VALUED AT $24 OR MORE FOR EVERY TUESDAY HOME GAME BY PRESENTING YOUR HARRIS TEETER VIC CARD AT THE BOX OFFICE
PNC
GEICO



"You get excited about every new stadium you enter. We're glad to be here and to have a presidential opener."

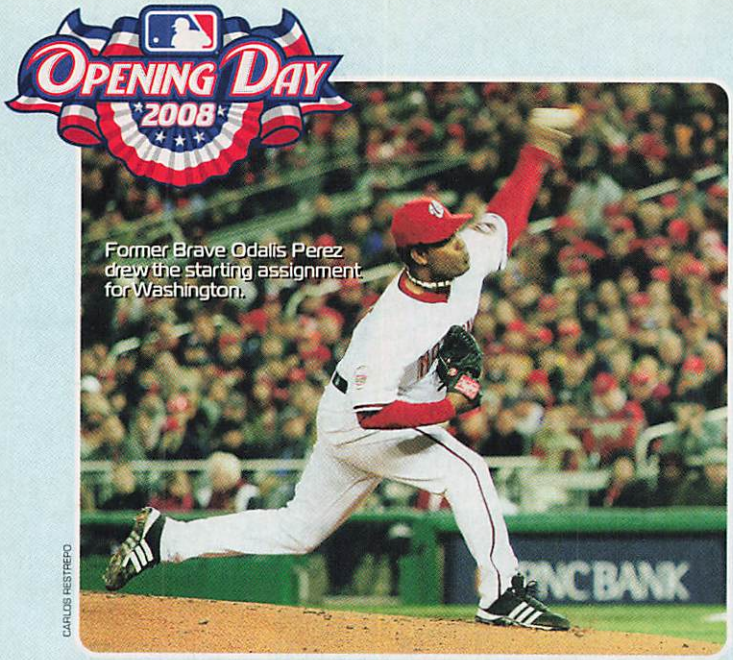
Indeed, this was the hot ticket in Washington. Fans in attendance included Washington mayor Adrian M. Fenty (in a Nats' hat and tie), former mayor Tony Williams, former Secretary of State Colin Powell, Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings, CNN host Wolf Blitzer, Redskins quarterback Jason Campbell, former America Online CEO Steve Case, and MSNBC's Tim Russert.

Nationals president Stan Kasten, who was



Former Secretary of State Colin Powell (above), Braves president John Schuerholz and Nationals president Stan Kasten (photo at left) and, of course, the players were among those who admired the new scoreboard and other features of the ballpark.

PHOTOS: CARLOS RESTREPO



CARLOS RESTREPO

president of the Braves from 1976-2001 and oversaw the conversion of the Olympic Stadium to Turner Field, said he was thrilled to be in the new park, even though the cherry blossoms over the left-field bleacher seats - one of his favorite features - weren't quite in bloom (they are a different variety than those around the National Mall, which were blooming).

"It's our first game ever, and we didn't even get in the ballpark 'til just this week," Kasten said. "We just have a lot of learning to do, but it's very exciting, and it's always great to see my friends the Braves."

The Nationals issued more than 600 press credentials for the game, and many of the reporters, photographers and camera crews were on the field before 3:30 (for an 8:15 game), admiring the Kentucky Bluegrass sod, brought in from New Jersey. The field has 98 sprinklers, and it takes two and a half hours to mow on each game day.

Bobby Cox said he walked the ballpark in the morning and was impressed. "There's nothing tricky like some of these other new ballparks," he said. "It's an even ballpark for pitchers and hitters. The dimensions are kind of like Turner Field."

Brian McCann said the ballpark reminded him of a "bigger Philly. It plays a little more of a pitcher's ballpark," he said. "The clubhouse is big and spacious. It's got a great kitchen and cafeteria, and they have a cook who will make anything you want."

McCann said he'd already eaten before batting practice, so he didn't order any food from the chef. But after the game, he said, he'd be ordering a lot.

"There's a cook down there?" asked Terry Pendleton. "I haven't seen that yet. But I do like the clubhouse."

The hitting coach said there is a separate conference room and video room for coaches, and a few empty rooms that don't seem to be finished yet.

"It's a major improvement from RFK," Pendleton said. "When you look at different new ballparks, you say, 'They spent how much on this?' But you look around here, and you can really tell where the money went."

McCann said during batting practice that he was excited to meet President Bush.

"I can't wait to see him," he said. "He's awesome."

Later, before the team left the clubhouse for pre-game festivities, the president (whose four-car motorcade drove right into the field-level concourse) posed with the Braves for a photo and shook hands with every player, signing autographs and addressing some players by name.

After the D.C. National Guard unveiled two giant flags in the outfield and the 121st Fighter Squadron of the D.C. Air National Guard flew four F-16s over the stadium, operatic star and Washington native Denyce Graves sang the Star-Spangled Banner. Then, Nats star Ryan Zimmerman handed the ball to Bush, and the president headed to the pitching mound. Wearing a red Nationals jacket, before a crowd of 39,389, he threw the ceremonial first pitch into the glove of Nationals manager Manny Acta. A helicopter circled, cameras flashed, and Mayor Fenty yelled, "Play ball!"

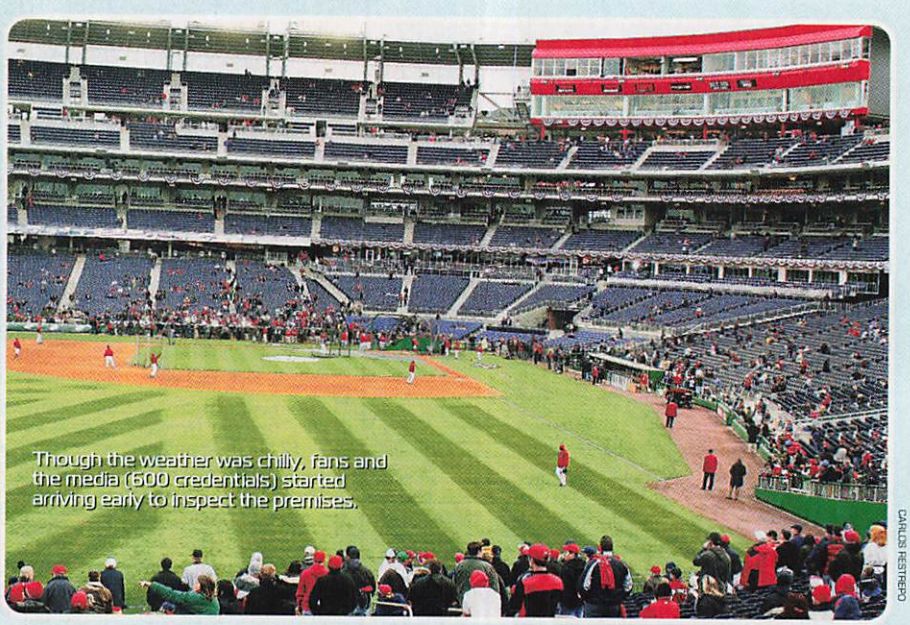
Braves fans noticed right away that the Braves were wearing brand new uniforms: navy blue jerseys and caps. The jersey has a script "Atlanta" across the chest, and the cap is reminiscent of that worn by the Braves in the 1960s. The uniforms will be used for occasional road games.

"The uniforms threw me for a loop when I first saw them," Lanzarone said. "I was always such a fan of the standard away uniforms, but they really just changed the colors around and still maintained that classic Braves look."

The game, broadcast to the nation on ESPN, ended up being a heartbreaker for Atlanta fans. Zimmerman won the game for the Nats, 3-2, with a home run in the bottom of the ninth inning. Lanzarone was disappointed and even started longing for the ol' days of RFK.

"I liked that stadium, because it was small, so you could shout at the players and they'd talk back to you," he said. "Jeff Francoeur threw me a dozen balls at RFK."

But despite the Braves' loss and seats in the nosebleeds, Lanzarone said he had a great night and will be back for future Braves games at Nationals Park, hopefully to warmer weather and Atlanta victories.



CARLOS RESTREPO

LEGEND OF NO. 6

NO MATTER HOW MANY GAMES COX WINS, HIS LEGACY WILL BE A PASSION FOR THE GAME

BY HAL BODLEY OF MLB.COM

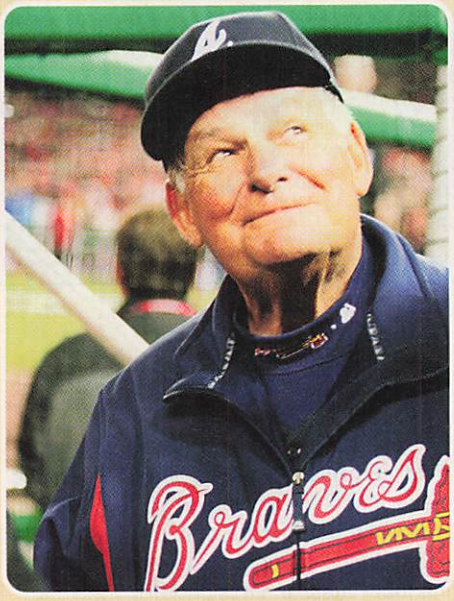
ASK BOBBY COX what his legacy will be, and he begins to squirm. In fact, I thought the interview would abruptly end right there - just like a lot of his conversations do with unsuspecting umpires.

"I have no idea, no clue," Cox finally blurts, almost looking ashamed. "I'm just a guy. I've been fortunate. I've had great players my whole career."

Then, after a scary pause, it's obvious he's hit upon it: "Just a passion for the game," he said, his eyes bright. "That's all."

I can't picture the Braves without Bobby Cox as their manager. People keep asking him when he's going to call it a career. Getting that answer is tougher than the legacy bit.

"Oh, I signed an extension [through 2008] and after that, I don't know," he said during spring training. "I enjoy doing what I'm doing. My enthusiasm comes from the love of the game. It brings a lot of joy and fun to me. I can't wait to put the uniform on each day."



CARLOS RESTREPO

Even John Schuerholz, who moved up to Braves president last October after 17 years as the most successful general manager in baseball, asks me if Bobby mentioned anything about his future.

"Everybody's trying to get the answer," Schuerholz said, laughing. "He leaves his options open. He still loves it and has plenty in him to give. He could go for quite awhile. He also could go do other things - comfortably and easily."

Cox turns 67 on May 21, but I think he's far from turning this team over to someone else.

Or as future Hall of Famer Tom Glavine, who returned to the Braves this season after five summers with the Mets, put it: "I feel bad for the guy taking his place."

Cox is what legends, if not legacies, are built about.

Until the Braves tumbled to third place in 2006, he guided them to a record 14 consecutive division titles since beginning his second tenure in their dugout on June 22, 1990. He also won a division title in Toronto (1985), and during his 26 years as a major league manager, ranks fourth on the all-time career list with 2,255 victories - just 120 behind St. Louis' Tony La Russa, who's in third place.

Enough for the impressive, if not cold, numbers.

Schuerholz should write the inscription for Cox's Hall of Fame plaque when his manager joins the Cooperstown elite.

Schuerholz said he'd scribble: "Here's a man who respected and loved the game of baseball, the players and the staff more than anyone who's ever worn the uniform."

Robert Joe Cox is the last person who can comfortably answer a question about himself. Yet inquire about this edition of the Braves, and there's little hesitation.

The return of Glavine, who reached 303 victories last season, is important. He won 242 of those games with the Braves before he was lured by the big bucks of New York. Even though he turned 42 in March, Glavine comes home to give the Braves a solid No. 3 starter to go with certain Hall of Famer John Smoltz and Tim Hudson.

While the Phillies and Mets are battling each other for the NL East title, I can see the Braves sneaking in.

"We're definitely under the radar, and that's fine with me," said Cox. "The Phillies are going to be good again. And what the Mets did [blowing a big late-season lead] could happen to anybody. Wins are not that easy to come by some times. Washington is improved - they've got some really good pitchers over there, and some younger talent."

Cox says the third-place emptiness of the last two seasons, "hasn't changed my approach one bit. I never felt any different when we won our 10th division title in a row. I always felt, it's over. I don't even remember it. You have to start all over again, so every spring is the same. What I'm building on now is that we came on strong last year and almost caught Philadelphia and New York.

"We've got pitching depth this year - a lot of it - and should be real good."

I don't believe there's another manager in baseball who could handle the constant rebuilding he's been asked to do. Schuerholz, and his successor Frank Wren, have constantly recast their team, just about every year.

Schuerholz says it's the responsibility of all organizations to understand the importance and power of change.

"You have to recognize the need to change our individual rosters from year to year to manage the economics of the game," he said. "Our philosophy has been if we're going to be a successful organization we have to manage change effectively. No one handles that better than Bobby Cox."

There's one given: The record Cox holds of 135 ejections by umpires will increase this year.

Sitting alone with him before an exhibition game, it's hard to believe he can so quickly ignite the ire of umpires so frequently.

It doesn't surprise Schuerholz one bit: "His communications style is if he feels it, if he believes it, he says it. He's honest. He doesn't need to filter what he thinks. When he's passionately in disagreement with an umpire on a call, that's how he is. He's so passionate about his team he wants to give them everything he can to win games. When he feels that's inaccurately or unfairly taken from his players, he's going to be Bobby."

Which is a huge part of his legacy - the passion, not the ejections.

BY BILL BALLEW

LATEST INTERNATIONAL SIGNEES FROM JAPAN, AUSTRALIA, PANAMA

THE BRAVES continue to scour the world for talent, as evidenced by several recent signings from around the globe.

They signed 16-year-old catcher Christian Betancourt of Panama City, Panama. The 6-foot-2 Betancourt is advanced with his defense and possesses an arm that grades between 60 and 70 on the 20-80 scouting scale, according to scout Luis Ortiz, who signed the teenager.

"This is a kid with bat potential," Ortiz said. "Right now, he has a tremendous body, built like Benito Santiago. He hits the ball from gap to gap, and he has good pull power. This is a kid who can play in the United States in the very near future."

The Braves were able to sign Betancourt prior to the July 2 international signing date because the youngster turns 16 prior to the end of the minor league season, which closes on Sept. 6. It was a loophole that paid dividends because Ortiz and Johnny Almaraz, the team's director of international operations, did such a thorough job while scouting Betancourt.

Australian infielder James Linger works out at Disney's Wide World of Sports in April.

BILL SETLIFF

Just prior to signing Betancourt, the Braves locked up the services of 18-year-old Shohei Sekiguchi, a lefthander from Marugame Josei High in the Japanese province of Kagawa Prefecture. Sekiguchi was eligible to be signed since he was bypassed in the Japanese draft. The southpaw was somewhat of an unknown commodity in his native country since he had not pitched in any national level tournaments. Even so, the Braves believe the raw Sekiguchi has potential to be a late bloomer.

Another international signing occurred earlier this year when the Braves came to terms with infielder James Linger on a contract that included a $120,000 bonus. A shortstop in Australia, Linger paced all hitters in his country's Triple-A national tournament by batting.405 with a .690 slugging percentage in 42 at-bats. He is expected to join the Braves in September for Instructional League after he graduates from high school.

SCHAFER SUSPENDED

THE BRAVES received disturbing news during the opening days of the minor league season when the Commissioner's office informed them that top prospect Jordan Schafer is suspended for 50 games for use of human growth hormone (HGH), which violates the minor league drug policy.

Other than a written two-paragraph statement by general manager Frank Wren, neither the Atlanta front office nor Schafer would discuss matters surrounding the suspension. Schafer started the season (11 at-bats) at Double-A Mississippi. He could return as soon as May 31, barring any rainouts or other cancellations involving the M-Braves.

RICHMOND
TRIPLE A

CHARLIE MORTON was off to a strong start. After blossoming last year, culminating with an impressive performance in the Arizona Fall League, the righthander threw well in spring training before allowing only one run and five hits in his first two starts, covering 10 1/3 innings...

Francisley Bueno, who was deemed a mild surprise by putting together a solid performance in big league spring training, continued to prove he may pitch in Atlanta soon. Bueno debuted this season by throwing four hitless innings on April 7...

Jo-Jo Reyes continues to make progress with alterations in his delivery, specifically improving his footwork during his windup. The lefthander also is working with Richmond pitching coach **Guy Hansen** on increasing his tempo while trying to reduce the way he throws across his body. During spring training, **Tom Glavine** and pitching coach **Roger McDowell** worked with Reyes on getting a better push off the rubber, which should make him more consistent in the strike zone...

Richmond manager **Dave Brundage** made **Buddy Carlyle** the R-Braves' Opening Day starter out of respect for the righthander. The 30-year-old Carlyle was the big league club's final cut of spring training after he went 8-7 in 20 starts with Atlanta in 2007...

Clint Sammons' reputation is centered on his superior defensive abilities, but the catcher from the University of Georgia posted hits in his first five games, including three two-hit outings...

Josh Anderson, acquired from Houston over the winter, had four multi-hit games during the season's opening week and made a handful of spectacular defensive plays in center. Anderson has excellent speed and a strong and accurate throwing arm...

While some observers projected **Brandon Jones** would play some left field for Atlanta in April, he did not pout about being sent back to Richmond. Jones hit safely in Richmond's first seven games...

Scott Thorman was hitless in his first 20 at-bats before stroking a two-run single in the seventh that led Richmond to a 2-1 victory over Buffalo on April 10...

Also struggling early was **Brent Lillibridge**, who started 4-for-29, yet posted a team-best seven RBIs, thanks in part to a four-RBI game against Rochester on April 5.

MISSISSIPPI

DOUBLE A

HOMETOWN HERO **Van Pope** is back in familiar surroundings during his second tour of duty with the M-Braves. Pope opened the season 0-for-10, then posted hits in four straight games, including a three-hit outing on April 10...

Another Mississippi returnee from 2007, **Mark Jurich**, is playing right field after splitting last season between left field and first base. Jurich has quietly put together consistent contributions since being drafted in the 13th round out of Louisville in 2004. He had a five-game hitting streak, hit two home runs in the first five games, and had two doubles and a pair of RBIs on April 10...

It would be easy for **Carl Loadenthal** to be disappointed about returning to Double-A after ranking among the organizational leaders last year at Mississippi with a .300 batting average and 40 stolen bases. Ever the professional, Loadenthal had three two-hit games during the season's first week. He also returned to center field when **Jordan Schafer** was suspended...

The Braves have been encouraged with the way righthander **Jerome Gamble** has thrown the ball since signing as a free agent over the winter...

Dan Smith struggled during his first two starts, but the Braves believe the lefthander has made significant strides after a disappointing second half in 2007... Outfielder **Greg Creek** had two triples during the first week after recording only two during his first three professional seasons.

MYRTLE BEACH

ADVANCED A

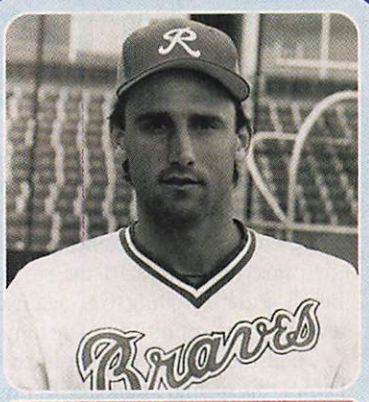
CENTERFIELDER **Gorkys Hernandez**, acquired with **Jair Jurrjens** from Detroit for **Edgar Renteria** in October, has impressed during his short time in the organization. Hernandez had hits in six of his first seven games, including three two-hit games...

Tommy Hanson lived up to his billing as the top right-handed pitching prospect in the organization during the first week. In his initial two starts, Hanson did not allow a run in 11 innings while surrendering only one hit. He also struck out 20, including 13 in five no-hit innings during the season opener at Wilmington on April 3...

Eric Campbell, who was expected to open the season as the Pelicans' starting third baseman after an injury-riddled 2007, was instead placed on the suspended list for undisclosed reasons. Campbell, the

Legends OF THE MINORS

BRAD KOMMINSK



BY BILL BALLEW

THE ATLANTA BRAVES looked to be building one of the more formidable young lineups in the major leagues during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Featuring the likes of Dale Murphy, Bob Horner and Glenn Hubbard, the team won the NL West in 1982 and appeared to have the makings of a perennial contender.

The situation looked particularly rosy with a farm system that included prospects such as Brad Komminsk, the fourth overall pick in the 1979 draft. The leftfielder's future was so promising, in fact, that Braves farm director and Hall of Famer Hank Aaron said Komminsk possessed, "the potential to be the next Dale Murphy."

EDITOR'S NOTE

Since the formation of the National League in 1876, baseball's best minds have been baffled by players who excel - often to extraordinary levels - in the minor leagues but never get over the hump in the majors. The Braves have had their share of these players that ChopTalk profiles monthly in this feature.

"I didn't pay too much attention to that type of stuff, particularly any press clippings I received," said the 46-year-old Komminsk. "That's because I had such high expectations for myself. Unfortunately, some of those things never quite materialized. But I just looked it at like I had to go out and perform every day, and for a while, I did very well."

Aaron's enthusiasm was understandable. After all, Komminsk displayed as much power potential as any player in the minor leagues. He homered in his first professional at-bat, with Kingsport in 1979, and hit two grand slams in one game at Class-A Anderson a year later. Komminsk proceeded to earn Carolina League MVP honors, leading the league with a .322 batting average and 104 RBIs in 1981 before leading Double-A Savannah with 26 home runs and 88 runs in 1982.

Komminsk looked to be on the verge of stardom in 1983 when he led the International League with a .596 slugging percentage and tied for the league lead with 14 game-winning RBIs. He also batted a career-high .334, which still ranks third in Richmond history, and was named the IL Rookie of the Year and the Braves' Minor League Player of the Year.

Success, however, proved fleeting at the major league level. Komminsk bounced between Richmond and Atlanta from 1984-86, and hit just .222 with four home runs while spending all of 1985 in the big leagues.

Traded to Milwaukee for Dion James in 1987, he led all Triple-A players in home runs that year with Denver, and later played for the Indians, Giants, Orioles and A's, and finally spent 1992-93 in the White Sox farm system. His playing career concluded with two years in Italy before he served as a player-coach at Triple-A Toledo in 1996 and 1997.

"Obviously I would have liked to have had a little bit better major league career, but it didn't happen," said Komminsk, who averaged .298 with 26 home runs and 89 RBIs in the minors from 1980-83.

Komminsk now manages in the minors. He spent eight seasons in the Cleveland farm system, earning manager of the year honors in the Florida State League (2001) and Eastern League (2002). After a one-year stint as a coach at Class A Clearwater in the Philadelphia organization, Komminsk joined the Orioles in 2008 as manager of their Double-A club at Bowie, Md.

BRANDON HICKS

MY ATTITUDE IS THAT NOBODY CAN BEAT ME

EDITOR'S NOTE

Brandon Hicks is a 22-year-old shortstop who was the Braves' third-round draft pick in 2007. After leading San Jacinto (Texas) to the Junior College World Series in 2006, he played one season at Texas A&M before signing. During his first taste of pro ball last summer, he batted a combined .285 with seven homers and 28 RBIs in 55 games between Danville and Rome. He's starting this season at advanced Class-A Myrtle Beach.

I WAS PRETTY EXCITED about how my first year in pro ball went. I also thought I did all right in spring training, getting my work in and going about my business. Now I'm getting the opportunity to start the season at Myrtle Beach, and it's exciting to go against such a high level of competition this early in my career.

I had the chance to play in five big league games this spring. I talked with my mom quite a bit, and she was saying how surreal everything seemed to her. I mean, here I was, not even two years removed from junior college, and I'm playing alongside Chipper Jones and Mark Teixeira and those guys.

A year ago, when I was still at Texas A&M, I had no clue that I'd ever get the opportunity to play at this level. It's definitely something different for me, but I couldn't be more excited about everything that has come my way.

I found myself this spring watching the older players, the guys that have been there before, seeing how they go about their business and get their work done. I asked a few questions to see how I could get better.

It was weird, growing up watching and looking up to Chipper Jones and then having the chance to talk with him about the game. That was a cool experience, and hopefully I'll benefit from having that opportunity.

> "THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PLAYING COLLEGE AND PRO BALL IS THE GRIND OF PLAYING GAMES EVERY DAY."

Two years ago, when I was coming out of junior college, I thought I was ready to sign. I wanted to go in that direction, and I talked to a lot of people about the possibility of getting drafted, but that didn't materialize. Instead, I had the chance to go to A&M, and the coaches there really helped me develop my game.

In retrospect, that was probably the best thing that could have happened. If I had been drafted and signed after my sophomore year, I don't think I'd be in the situation I'm in now and wouldn't have learned the things I've already learned.

The biggest difference between playing college and pro ball is the grind of playing games every day. It isn't always easy getting your body ready to play every night. That's why I worked so hard this past off-season to get my body prepared to last throughout the entire year. The last thing I want to do is break down during the season.

I did a lot of running and working out with the weights in order to report to spring training in great shape. The Braves really stressed to us that being in top shape, as well as keeping our diets as healthy as possible, was necessary to have success over the course of the long season.

I'm not a cocky player, but I realize that in order to have success in this game, you must be confident in your ability. If you're not confident, you're not going to do well.

I prepare myself both mentally and physically prior to every game. My attitude when I take the field is that nobody can beat me. I feel that's the way you have to go about your business to be successful.

Right now I feel that my strength is my athletic ability. I believe I'm capable of doing each of the five tools you always hear scouts talk about. I also know I can get better in all five categories.

Plus, I realize as soon as you get comfortable, there's someone right behind you trying to take your spot. That's why you have to keep improving every chance you get, and that's what I intend to do every day this season.

Braves' first pick in the 2005 draft, has displayed impressive ability, sharing the Appalachian League Player of the Year award in 2005 and winning the South Atlantic League home run title in 2006. However, he was sent home during Hawaii Winter Baseball in 2006 as well as from Myrtle Beach last August...

The Pelicans added former NFL running backs **Jerome Bettis** and **Eddie George** to the team's ownership group prior to the start of the season.

ROME
CLASS A

ROME HAS quite a powerful lineup with **Jason Heyward**, **Cody Johnson** and **Freddie Freeman** batting third, fourth and fifth, respectively, most nights. Heyward and Johnson were Atlanta's first-round draft picks in 2007 and 2006, respectively, and Freeman was taken in the second round last June. Both Heyward and Johnson homered on April 7. Johnson's first two hits were home runs, part of a 3-for-23 start before a 4-for-5 night with three runs scored and four RBIs versus Columbus on April 9...

Another significant contributor in the Rome lineup is **Concepcion Rodriguez**. The 21-year-old outfielder from Panama, who hit just .206 last summer, has added strength and hit safely in six of his first eight games, including a home run in the season opener...

Rome opened the season with nine left-handers on its pitching staff...

Steve Evarts allowed only an unearned run and four hits in five innings of work during his debut on April 6....

After an impressive performance in the Mexican Pacific League last winter, left-hander **Edgar Osuna** continues to make his presence felt in the Atlanta organization. In his first outing of the season, a four-inning stint versus Charleston on April 6, Osuna struck out eight of the 15 he faced. Osuna, who ranked third in the Appalachian League last year with a 2.47 ERA, has developed one of the best changeups in the organization to go with impeccable control.

ORGANIZATIONAL

LEFTHANDER **Cole Rohrbough**, considered to be one of the top pitching prospects in the organization, opened the season in extended spring training on the seven-day disabled list. He is expected to be sent to Myrtle Beach.

OPENING DAY ROSTERS

RICHMOND
TRIPLE A

PITCHERS
Ryan Basner
Francisley Bueno
Jorge Campillo
Buddy Carlyle
Matt DeSalvo
Charlie Morton
Damian Moss
Vladimir Nunez
Jo-Jo Reyes
Jeff Ridgway
Jonathon Rouwenhorst
Zach Schreiber
Phil Stockman

CATCHERS
Clint Sammons
Ray Serrano

INFIELDERS
Barbaro Canizares
J.C. Holt
Brent Lillibridge
Scott Thorman
Wes Timmons

OUTFIELDERS
Josh Anderson
Joe Borchard
Brandon Jones
Reggie Taylor

MISSISSIPPI
DOUBLE A

PITCHERS
Jairo Cuevas
Dustin Evans
Sung Ki Jung
Kris Medlen
Brad Nelson
Michael Nix
James Parr
Nelson Payano
Todd Redmond
Dan Smith
Luis Valdez

CATCHERS
J.C. Boscan
Jose Camarena

INFIELDERS
Greg Creek
Javier Guzman
Diory Hernandez
Kala Ka'aihue
Van Pope
Mike Rozema

OUTFIELDERS
Jerome Gamble
Mark Jurich
Carl Loadenthal
Jordan Schafer
Matt Young

MYRTLE BEACH
ADVANCED A

PITCHERS
Brett Butts
Kyle Cofield
Bryan Dumesnil
Nicholas Fellman
Tejada Ferdin
Kevin Gunderson
Tommy Hanson
Deunte Heath
Lee Hyde*
Gonzalo Lopez
Jeff Lyman
Ryan Reynoso
Jose Santiago*
Carlos Sencion
Jonathan Venters*
Chris Vines
David Wilson*

CATCHERS
Phillip Britton
Tyler Flowers

INFIELDERS
Derrick Arnold
Paul Bennett
Brandon Hicks
Travis Jones
Robert Marcial
Ernesto Mejia

OUTFIELDERS
Roberto Alvarez
Jose Cabrera
Quentin Davis*
Gorkys Hernandez
Jon Mark Owings

ROME
CLASS A

PITCHERS
Eric Barrett
Michael Broadway
Yeliar Castro
Scott Diamond
Steve Evarts
Raul Gonzalez
Jeff Locke
Jose Ortegano
Edgar Osuna
Thomas Palica
Benino Pruneda
Carlos Rivas
Chad Rodgers

CATCHERS
Chris Anderson
Javier Dominguez

INFIELDERS
Adam Coe
Michael Fisher
Freddie Freeman
Chad Lundahl
Cole Miles
Samuel Sime

OUTFIELDERS
Jason Heyward
Cody Johnson
Concepcion Rodriguez
Yohan Silva

* Inactive

Two Hilton Family Brands In One Great Location!

EMBASSY SUITES® ATLANTA – AT CENTENNIAL OLYMPIC PARK

Our great location keeps getting better. We're across the street from two of Atlanta's famous destinations, the Georgia Aquarium and the new World of Coca-Cola®!

Every one of our spacious, two-room suites overlooks a sky-lit atrium where you can enjoy a complimentary, full cooked-to-order breakfast in the morning and beverages each evening at our Manager's Reception*.

Enjoy the many attractions this area has to offer while here for a Braves game! Ask for the Braves rate by calling 1-800-EMBASSYor book one of our exciting packages on line at www.atlantacentennialpark.embsuites.com

*Subject to state and local laws. Must be of legal drinking age.

EMBASSY SUITES HOTEL®
Atlanta—at Centennial Olympic Park
267 Marietta St, Atlanta, GA 30313
404-223-2300

HILTON GARDEN INN ATLANTA DOWNTOWN

Opening March, 2008 – A new Hilton Garden Inn in the same great location. 242 guestrooms; complimentary wi-fi throughout the hotel; 24 hour workout facility; complimentary 24 hour business center plus valet and self laundry available.

Our unique property includes Legal Sea Foods, a rooftop bar overlooking Centennial Olympic Park; and of course, our premier location across the street from the Georgia Aquarium and the new World of Coca-Cola! Enjoy these attractions while here for a Braves game by booking one of our exciting packages on line at www.atlantadowntown.stayhgi.com ! Or if it's just a great rate you're looking for ask for the Braves rate by calling 1-877-STAYHGI. Everything. Right where you need it.

Hilton Garden Inn Atlanta Downtown
275 Baker Street • Atlanta, GA 30313
©2007 Hilton Hospitality, Inc.

ESPN Cable Sports Network | **FSN** FSN South | **SS** SportSouth

FOX Fox Broadcasting System | **PTV** Peachtree TV | **TBS**

All games on WGST-AM (640), The Bull (94.9 FM), and Braves Network affiliates.

APRIL/MAY

TURNER FIELD | AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
27 1:10 PM NYM SS		29 7:10 PM WSH SS	30 4:35 PM WSH SS	1	2 7:30 PM CIN PTV	3 7:00 PM CIN PTV
4 1:30 PM CIN SS	5	6 7:00 PM SD SS	7 7:00 PM SD FSN	8 1:00 PM SD SS	9 7:05 PM PIT SS	10 7:05 PM PIT SS
11 1:35 PM PIT SS	12 12:35 PM PIT SS	13 7:05 PM PHI SS	14 7:05 PM PHI FSN	15 7:05 PM PHI SS	16 7:30 PM OAK PTV	17 7:00 PM OAK PTV
18 1:30 PM OAK SS	19	20 PTV 1:00 PM NYM / SS 7:00 PM NYM	21 7:00 PM NYM FSN	22 7:00 PM NYM PTV	23 7:30 PM AZ PTV	24 3:55 PM AZ FOX
25 1:30 PM AZ SS	26 1:00 PM AZ SS	27 8:05 PM MIL SS	28 8:05 PM MIL FSN	29 1:05 PM MIL SS	30 7:10 PM CIN SS	31 3:55 PM PM CIN FOX

JUNE

TURNER FIELD | AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 1:15 PM CIN SS	2 7:00 PM FLA SS	3 7:00 PM FLA PTV	4 1:00 PM FLA PTV	5 7:00 PM FLA PTV	6 7:30 PM PHI PTV	7 7:00 PM PHI PTV
8 1:30 PM PHI SS	9	10 8:05 PM CHC PTV	11 8:05 PM CHC FSN	12 2:20 PM CHC PTV	13 10:05 PM LAA SS	14 9:05 PM LAA SS
15 TBD LAA SS	16 TBD COL SS	17 8:05 PM TX PTV	18 8:05 PM TX FSN	19 2:05 PM TX PTV	20 7:30 PM SEA PTV	21 7:00 PM SEA PTV
22 1:30 M SEA SS	23 7:00 PM MIL FSN	24 7:00 PM MIL PTV	25 1:00 PM MIL PTV	26	27 7:07 PM TOR SS	28 1:07 PM PM TOR SS
29 1:07 PM TOR SS	30					

JULY

ALL-STAR GAME | TURNER FIELD | AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1 7:00 PM PHI PTV	2 7:00 PM PHI FSN	3 7:00 PM PHI PTV	4 7:30 PM HOU PTV	5 7:00 PM HOU PTV
6 1:30 PM HOU SS	7 10:10 PM LAD SS	8 10:10 PM LAD SS	9 10:10 PM LAD FSN	10	11 10:05 PM SD SS	12 10:05 PM SD SS
13 4:05 PM SD SS	14	15 8:00 PM ALL-STAR GAME YANKEE STADIUM	16	17	18 7:30 PM WSH PTV	19 7:00 PM WSH PTV
20 1:30 PM WSH SS	21 7:10 PM FLA SS	22 7:10 PM FLA SS	23 7:10 PM FLA FSN	24	25 7:05 PM PHI PTV	26 3:55 PM PHI FOX
27 1:35 PM PHI SS	28 7:00 PM STL SS	29 7:00 PM STL PTV	30 7:00 PM STL FSN	31 7:00 PM STL PTV		

TENTATIVE; SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
FOR SEASON, GROUP AND SUITE TICKET INFORMATION CALL (404) 577-9100 OR VISIT braves.com

AUGUST

TURNER FIELD | AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 7:30 PM MIL PTV	2 3:55 PM MIL FOX
3 1:30 PM MIL SS	4 10:15 PM SF SS	5 10:15 PM SF SS	6 3:45 PM SF FSN	7 9:40 PM AZ SS	8 9:40 PM AZ SS	9 3:55 PM AZ FOX
10 4:10 PM AZ SS	11	12 7:00 PM CHC PTV	13 7:00 PM CHC FSN	14 7:00 PM CHC FSN	15 7:30 PM SF PTV	16 7:00 PM SF PTV
17 1:30 PM SF SS	18 4:30 PM SF SS	19 7:10 PM NYM PTV	20 7:10 PM NYM FSN	21 7:10 PM NYM PTV	22 8:15 PM STL SS	23 3:55 PM STL FOX
24 2:15 PM STL SS	25	26 7:00 PM FLA SS	27 7:00 PM FLA FSN	28 7:00 PM FLA SS	29 7:35 PM WSH SS	30 7:10 PM WSH SS
31 1:35 PM WSH SS						

SEPTEMBER

TURNER FIELD | AWAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 1:10 PM FLA SS	2 7:10 PM FLA SS	3 1:10 PM FLA FSN	4 7:00 PM WSH FSN	5 7:30 PM WSH PTV	6 7:00 PM WSH SS
7 1:30 PM WSH SS	8	9 7:00 PM COL PTV	10 7:00 PM COL FSN	11 7:00 PM COL PTV	12 7:10 PM NYM ESPN	13 3:55 PM NYM FOX
14 1:10 PM NYM SS	15	16 7:00 PM PHI SS	17 7:00 PM PHI FSN	18 7:00 PM PHI PTV	19 7:30 PM NYM PTV	20 7:00 PM NYM SS
21 1:30 PM NYM SS	22 7:05 PM PHI PTV	23 7:05 PM PHI PTV	24 7:05 PM PHI FSN	25	26 8:05 PM HOU SS	27 7:05 PM HOU SS
28 2:05 PM HOU SS	29	30				

OCTOBER

POST-SEASON DATES ARE TENTATIVE, UNOFFICIAL AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 08 DIVISION SERIES	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9 08 LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22 08 WORLD SERIES GAME 1	23 08 WORLD SERIES GAME 2	24	25 08 WORLD SERIES GAME 3
26 08 WORLD SERIES GAME 4	27 08 WORLD SERIES GAME 5	28	29 08 WORLD SERIES GAME 6	30 08 WORLD SERIES GAME 7	31	

TICKETING

TO PURCHASE SEASON TICKETS OR FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL (404) 577-9100 OR VISIT **braves.com/tickets**

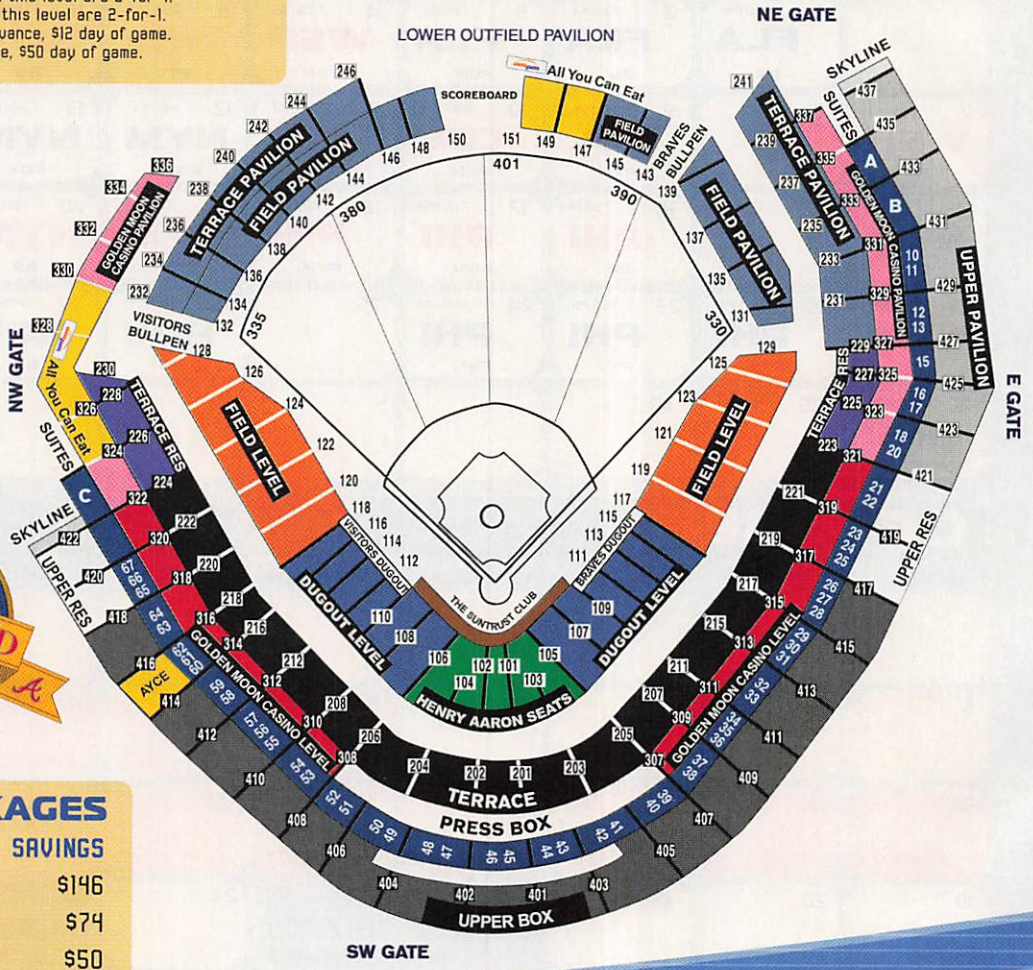
INDIVIDUAL PRICES

SECTION	REGULAR	PREMIUM*
Henry Aaron	$70	$74
Dugout	$60	$64
Golden Moon Casino Level	$38	$42
Field	$36	$40
Terrace	$36	$40
Club Pavilion	$28	$32
Terrace Reserved	$24	$28
Outfield Pavilion**	$22	$26
Upper Box	$12	$16
Upper Reserved***	$8	$12
Upper Pavilion	$6	$6

* All Friday, Saturday games and Opening Day.
** All Wednesday games in this level are 2-for-1.
*** All Tuesday games in this level are 2-for-1.
Parking: $10 per car in advance, $12 day of game.
$40 per bus in advance, $50 day of game.

FULL SEASON

SECTION	PRICE	SAVINGS
Dugout	$4,316	$772
Terrace	$2,490	$606
Field	$2,490	$606
Club	$2,822	$440
Outfield Pavilion	$996	$938
Upper Box	$830	$274
Upper Pavilion	$249	$249
Terrace Reserved*	$1,826	$274
Club Pavilion*	$2,158	$274
All You Can Eat Outfield	$2,905	$965
All You Can Eat Club Pavilion	$3,984	$1,546



PARKING PACKAGES

	PRICE	SAVINGS
Full Season	$850	$146
Half Season	$430	$74
Weekend	$310	$50
20-Game	$200	$40

MUSEUM & TOUR INFO

The Ivan Allen Jr. Braves Museum features more than 500 Braves artifacts that trace the team's history from its beginnings in Boston (1871-1952) to Milwaukee (1953-65) to Atlanta (1966-present). It is located on the northwest side of Turner Field at aisle 134. The museum opens two and a half hours before each game and closes in the middle of the seventh inning. The museum is open year-round and is the starting point of one-hour guided tours of Turner Field. Tours leave on the hour.

Tour reservations are not necessary for individuals or groups of less than 20 people. Tickets can be purchased the day of the tour at the main ticket window. Free parking in the Green lot.

Admission to the museum during games is one token ($2) and $5 on non-game days. Tour tickets are $12 for adults, $7 for children and $10 for groups of 20 or more. Walk-up tickets can be purchased at the ticket window. Groups of 20 or more and school groups must make reservations two weeks in advance by calling (404) 614-2311.

HOURS OF OPERATION

APRIL - OCTOBER	
Monday - Saturday	9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
Sunday	1 - 3 p.m.
OCTOBER - MARCH	
Monday - Saturday	10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
DEC. 23-JAN. 3	CLOSED

TOUR TICKETS

ADULTS	$12
CHILDREN 13 and Under	$7
MILITARY	$7
GROUP	$10

SCHOOL GROUP PRICES

CHILDREN	$5
ADULTS	$7

*Subject to change
Tours not available when the Braves have afternoon home games

TICKET SPECIALS

- Coca-Cola 2-for-1 Tuesdays: Buy 1 Upper Reserved for $8, get 1 Free.
- MasterCard Grand Slam Pack: 4 Tickets, 4 hotdogs, 4 Cokes, parking and yearbook, starting at $59.
- McDonald's Outfield Advantage: Wednesdays, Buy 1 Outfield Pavilion for $22, Get 1 Free.
- College Discount: Show college ID at Turner Field ticket window to get 2 Upper Box tickets for the price of 1.
- Military Discount: Show ID at Turner Field ticket window to get 2 Upper Box tickets for the price of 1.
- Topps Thursdays: Present/surrender 1 Topps baseball card wrapper at Turner Field ticket window to receive 1 Free Outfield Pavilion ticket with the purchase of 1 ticket of equal/greater value.

* All ticket offers subject to availability. Seating restrictions may apply. Not to be combined with any other discount, promotion or coupon. No reservations or tickets by phone or outlet. Free ticket offers can only be transacted at Turner Field ticket office.

HALF SEASON

Section	Price	Savings
Field	$1,344	$276
Club	$1,512	$192
Outfield Pavilion	$714	$318
Upper Box	$462	$150

WEEKEND PACKAGE

Section	Price	Savings
Field	$960	$180
Club	$1,080	$120
Outfield Pavilion	$510	$210
Upper Box	$330	$90

20-GAME PLANS

Section	Price	Savings
Club	$720	$92
Field	$640	$132

MAY EVENTS

May 2 vs. Reds Fireworks (Publix)
May 4 vs. Reds Alumni Meet & Greet
May 7 vs. Padres Braves Visors (NAPA)
May 16 vs. Oakland Fireworks (Publix)
May 18 vs. Oakland Bark In The Park; Alumni Meet & Greet
May 20 vs. Mets Magnetic Schedules (Georgia Power)
May 21 vs. Mets Mark Teixeira Bobbleheads (Coca-Cola)
May 22 vs. Mets Braves Carry-On Bags (Delta); Asian Night
May 23 vs. Diamondbacks Fireworks (Publix)
May 25 vs. Diamondbacks Alumni Meet & Greet

4-GAME PACK

	TERRACE LEVEL $140	OUTFIELD PAVILION $84	UPPER BOX $44	
BOBBLEHEAD GIVEAWAY PACK	May 21 (Mets)	June 25 (Milwaukee)	Aug. 27 (Florida)	Sept. 9 (Colorado)
NL CENTRAL PACK	May 3 (Cincinnati)	July 29 (St. Louis)	Aug. 1 (Milwaukee)	Aug. 12 (Cubs)
HAT GIVEAWAY PACK	May 7 (San Diego)	July 30 (St. Louis)	Aug. 26 (Florida)	Sept. 17 (Philadelphia)
HOLIDAY WEEKEND PACK	May 25 (Arizona)	May 26 (Arizona)	July 4 (Houston)	July 5 (Houston)
T-SHIRT GIVEAWAY PACK	June 4 (Florida)	July 2 (Philadelphia)	Aug. 13 (Cubs)	Sept. 10 (Colorado)

Spring TRAINING INDIVIDUAL STATS

Final (Record 15-15)
Hitters ranked by batting average.
Pitchers ranked by ERA.

BATTER	AVG	SLG	OBP	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	TB	BB	SO
DIAZ	.385	.462	.411	22	52	9	20	2	1	0	6	24	0	9
ESCOBAR	.361	.508	.394	25	61	14	22	3	0	2	13	31	4	10
C. JONES	.348	.609	.436	20	46	7	16	6	0	2	7	28	8	4
PRADO	.342	.452	.407	28	73	16	25	8	0	0	14	33	8	3
BLANCO	.326	.442	.464	21	43	7	14	1	2	0	8	19	11	6
BORCHARD	.317	.561	.356	25	41	8	13	8	1	0	12	23	3	10
SCHAFER	.316	.421	.356	17	38	8	12	4	0	0	6	16	4	7
PENA	.290	.323	.303	19	31	3	9	1	0	0	2	10	1	2
McCANN	.277	.426	.292	20	47	5	13	1	0	2	7	20	1	6
ANDERSON	.260	.320	.302	28	50	8	13	3	0	0	9	16	3	5
MILLER	.259	.407	.300	14	27	3	7	1	0	1	9	11	2	5
GOTAY (NYM)	.250	.500	.423	14	20	2	5	2	0	1	3	10	6	6
FRANCOEUR	.242	.371	.266	24	62	7	15	5	0	1	8	23	1	9
KOTSAY	.241	.293	.279	23	58	10	14	3	0	0	3	17	3	7
JOHNSON	.226	.264	.305	22	53	8	12	2	0	0	3	14	6	4
LILLIBRIDGE	.224	.345	.348	29	58	9	13	3	2	0	12	20	6	18
B. JONES	.211	.263	.348	19	38	12	8	2	0	0	4	10	8	9
TEIXEIRA	.211	.351	.258	23	57	7	12	2	0	2	12	20	4	15
THORMAN	.176	.314	.241	25	51	7	9	1	0	2	10	16	5	7

KEY: AVG-Batting average, SLG-Slugging percentage, OBP-On-base percentage, G-Games, AB-At-bats, R-Runs, H-Hits, 2B-Doubles, 3B-Triples, HR-Home runs, RBI-Runs batted in, TB-Total bases, BB-Walks, SO-Strikeouts, W-L-Wins-Losses, ERA-Earned run average, GS-Starts, SV-Saves, IP-Innings pitched, WHIP-Walks-plus-hits per inning pitched, OBA-Opponents' batting average.

PITCHER	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	IP	H	R	ER	HR	BB	SO	WHIP	OBA
HUDSON	2-0	1.47	5	5	0	18.1	17	8	3	1	6	8	1.25	.312
ACOSTA	0-0	1.64	10	0	1	11	8	4	2	0	3	11	1.00	.256
BENNETT	0-1	1.93	6	2	0	14	7	5	3	0	6	5	0.93	.255
HAMPTON	1-0	2.16	5	5	0	16.2	15	5	4	2	5	11	1.20	.294
RESOP	0-0	2.25	9	0	0	12	13	3	3	0	1	15	1.17	.280
RING	1-1	2.38	11	1	1	11.1	10	3	3	1	9	10	1.68	.377
GLAVINE	1-0	3.29	4	4	0	13.2	13	6	5	1	6	11	1.39	.317
OHMAN	1-1	3.60	10	0	0	10	13	4	4	1	0	7	1.30	.333
SORIANO	0-0	3.60	5	0	0	5	5	2	2	1	2	7	1.40	.333
BOYER	1-2	3.86	9	0	0	14	15	6	6	0	3	11	1.29	.362
MOYLAN	0-1	4.15	9	1	0	8.2	8	5	4	0	5	6	1.50	.350
JURRJENS	2-3	5.03	6	6	0	19.2	20	11	11	0	9	9	1.47	.345
CARLYLE	1-2	5.40	7	3	0	15	15	9	9	4	2	14	1.13	.290
SMOLTZ	0-0	5.79	1	1	0	4.2	4	5	3	1	2	4	1.29	.300
MOSS	0-0	6.00	5	0	1	6	7	5	4	0	4	6	1.83	.400
RIDGWAY	0-0	6.10	10	0	0	10.1	14	10	7	0	11	5	2.42	.481
REYES	0-0	9.82	4	3	0	11	15	12	12	2	11	10	2.36	.456

Braves Individual Stats

AS OF 4/14/08

BATTERS

BATTERS	AVG	G	AB	R	H	2B	3B	HR	RBI	TB	BB	SO	SB	CS	OBP	SLG	E
JONES	.408	12	49	10	20	2	0	2	11	28	4	5	0	0	.444	.571	1
ESCOBAR	.340	12	47	11	16	2	1	2	9	26	8	7	0	0	.436	.553	1
McCANN	.317	12	41	7	13	4	0	3	8	26	5	2	0	0	.383	.634	0
FRANCOEUR	.286	12	49	8	14	2	1	3	12	27	2	5	0	0	.308	.551	0
GOTAY	.286	9	7	2	2	1	0	0	0	3	2	3	0	0	.444	.429	0
JOHNSON	.263	10	38	4	10	1	0	1	4	14	1	7	1	1	.282	.368	1
KOTSAY	.250	12	44	7	11	2	1	1	3	18	4	5	0	0	.313	.409	0
PRADO	.250	6	16	6	4	1	1	0	1	7	4	0	1	0	.400	.438	0
DIAZ	.245	12	49	2	12	1	0	1	8	16	0	13	1	0	.245	.327	0
TEIXEIRA	.213	12	47	8	10	2	0	2	6	18	6	6	0	0	.302	.383	0
BLANCO	.200	7	5	1	1	1	0	0	0	2	1	2	0	0	.333	.400	0
MILLER	.167	3	6	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	.167	.167	0
PENA	.167	7	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	.286	.167	0
TOTALS	.272	12	423	67	115	19	4	15	64	187	41	64	3	1	.334	.442	3

BATTING KEY: AVG-Batting average, SLG-Slugging percentage, OBP-On-base percentage, G-Games, AB-At-bats, R-Runs, H-Hits, 2B-Doubles, 3B-Triples, HR-Home runs, RBI-Runs batted in, TB-Total bases, BB-Walks, SO-Strikeouts, SB-Stolen bases, CS-Caught stealing, E-Errors

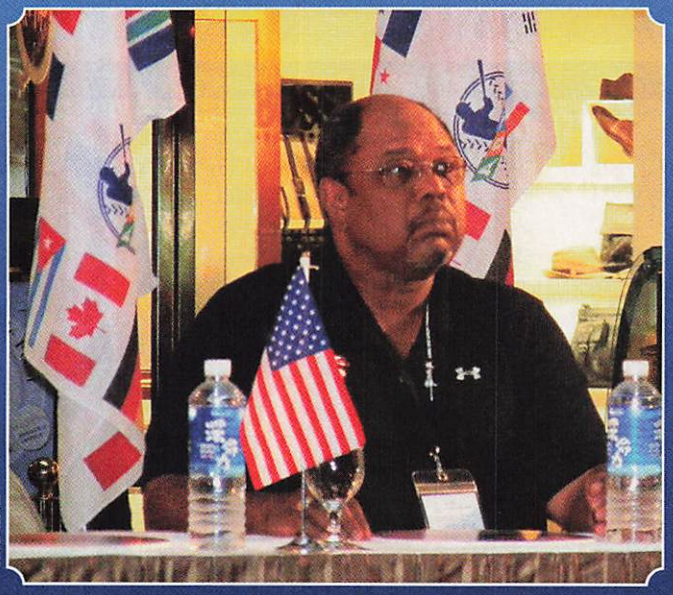
PITCHING KEY: W-L-Wins-Losses, ERA-Earned run average, GS-Starts, SV-Saves, SVO-Save opportunities, IP-Innings pitched, WHIP-Walks-plus-hits per inning pitched, OBA-Opponents' batting average.

PITCHERS

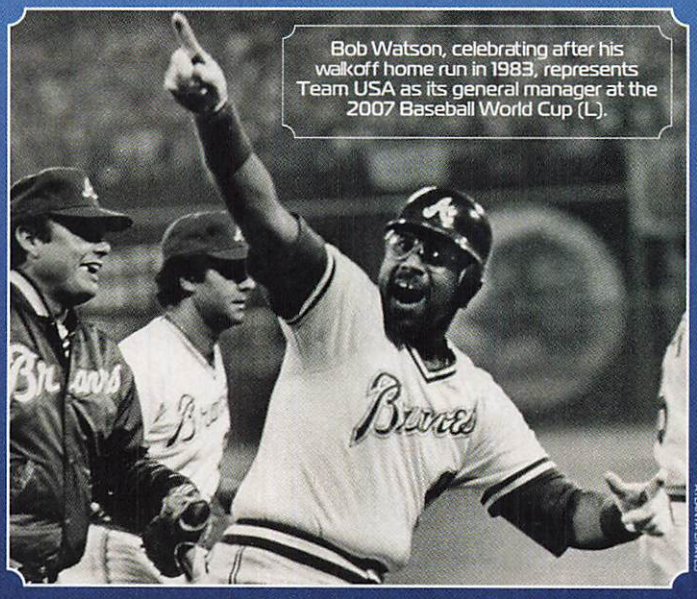
PITCHERS	W-L	ERA	G	GS	SV	SVO	IP	H	R	ER	HR	BB	SO	WHIP	OBA	E
CAMPILLO	0-0	0.00	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	0.00	.000	0
SMOLTZ	2-0	0.82	2	2	0	0	11	7	1	1	0	4	11	1.00	.256	1
MOYLAN	0-1	1.59	7	0	1	2	5.2	5	1	1	1	1	5	1.06	.200	0
HUDSON	2-0	2.14	3	3	0	0	21	12	5	5	0	2	12	0.67	.200	1
OHMAN	0-0	2.25	7	0	0	1	4	4	3	1	0	2	0	1.50	.333	0
SORIANO	0-0	2.25	4	0	1	1	4	2	1	1	0	3	5	1.25	.294	0
GLAVINE	0-1	2.38	3	3	0	0	11.1	13	4	3	0	6	6	1.68	.388	0
JURRJENS	1-1	4.38	2	2	0	0	12.1	16	6	6	0	3	8	1.54	.352	0
BENNETT	0-0	4.61	6	1	0	0	13.2	12	7	7	0	9	8	1.54	.383	0
BOYER	0-2	5.87	6	0	0	1	7.2	4	5	5	2	2	13	0.78	.214	0
ACOSTA	0-0	7.20	5	0	0	0	5	5	4	4	2	3	4	1.60	.364	0
RING	0-0	9.00	4	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	0	3	1.00	.250	0
RESOP	0-1	12.60	7	0	0	0	5	8	7	7	1	4	2	2.40	.480	0
JAMES	0-1	18.00	1	1	0	0	3	5	6	6	1	1	5	2.00	.500	0
TOTALS	5-7	4.10	12	12	2	5	107.2	95	52	49	7	40	85	1.25	.238	2

GAME BY GAME

GAME	DATE	OPP	H/A	W-L	SCORE	W/L PITCHER	ATL HRS	REC	POS	GB
1	3/30	WAS	A	L	2-3	Moylan (0-1)	Jones (1)	0-1	5	-1/2
2	3/31	PIT	H	L	11-12 (12)	Boyer (0-1)	McCann (1), Francoeur (1)	0-2	5	-2
3	4/2	PIT	H	W	10-2	Jurrjens (1-0)	Diaz (1), Teixeira (1), Escobar (1)	1-2	T-3	-2
4	4/3	PIT	H	L	3-4 (10)	Resop (0-1)	—	1-3	5	-2
5	4/5	NYM	H	W	11-5	Hudson (1-0)	Johnson (1)	2-3	T-4	-1
6	4/6	NYM	H	W	3-1	Smoltz (1-0)	Teixeira (2)	3-3	T-1	—
7	4/7	COL	A	L	1-2	Boyer (0-2)	—	3-4	T-2	-1
8	4/8	COL	A	L	3-4	Jurrjens (1-1)	Kotsay (1)	3-5	T-3	-1 1/2
9	4/9	COL	A	L	6-12	James (0-1)	McCann (2)	3-6	T-4	-2 1/2
10	4/11	WAS	A	W	3-0	Hudson (2-0)	Escobar (2)	4-6	4	-3
11	4/12	WAS	A	W	10-2	Smoltz (2-0)	Francoeur 2 (3), McCann (3)	5-6	4	-2
12	4/13	WAS	A	L	4-5	Glavine (0-1)	Jones (2)	5-7	4	-2



USA BASEBALL



Bob Watson, celebrating after his walkoff home run in 1983, represents Team USA as its general manager at the 2007 Baseball World Cup (L).

ATLANTA BRAVES

MULTI-TALENTED

Bob Watson's Dual Accomplishments As a Player/Executive May Be Unmatched

BY BRIAN KNAPP

NO AFRICAN-AMERICAN in baseball history has advanced further than Bob Watson, and at age 62, he remains keenly aware of his place in the game. As Major League Baseball's vice president of standards and on-field operations, he has evolved into a jack of all executive trades. Demands on his time are many, as have been his sacrifices.

"I wear a number of hats," said Watson, who's entering his 43rd season in big league ball. "During the season, I probably work 12 to 15 hours a day."

Charged with overseeing the ground rules and safety issues (including padding, signage, additions and renovations) in all 30 stadiums, Watson also represents the law and order within the national pastime. When someone steps out of line, they pay a visit to his office.

"I'm the disciplinarian," said Watson, who in 1983 hit one of the more-memorable home runs in Atlanta Braves history. "I handle all the fines and suspensions, from ownership down to the bat boys."

The oftentimes thankless job has forced Watson into the middle of some of baseball's most embarrassing incidents in recent years, from Cubs outfielder Sammy Sosa's corked bat episode at Wrigley Field in 2003 to Rangers pitcher Kenny Rogers' unprovoked assault on a television cameraman at Ameriquest Field two years later.

"Those were not fun," said Watson, who still carries the nickname "Bull."

Most times, those who cross the line have no defense on which to stand, since their actions have either been documented by the media or by watchful bystanders.

"If I have to make a decision, a player's already done something to get my attention," Watson said. "It's usually cut and dry, on film and with eyewitnesses. There's a whole laundry list of what I can do in terms of punishment."

Watson – who spent nearly four decades as a player, coach and general manager before joining MLB management – credits his experience on the field, in the dugout and in the front office with giving him a unique perspective. He views the game from every possible angle.

"I've been in that seat, whatever it is, when I've had to hand something down," Watson said. "I've been there. I understand what the other side feels like."

His responsibilities do not end there, however. As general manager for USA Baseball, the national governing body of the sport, Watson carries the difficult task of putting together the professional teams that represent the United States in international competition – the World Baseball Classic, the International Baseball Federation World Cup and the Summer Olympics.

"I select everybody who's involved – players, coaches, managers, you name it – and help with logistics," Watson said.

His input has resulted in positive returns. In November, the latest team with Watson's fingerprints on it – managed by former Braves second baseman Dave Johnson (1973-75) – defeated Cuba to win America's first IBAF World Cub since 1974. Cuba entered the tournament, which is held every two years, as the nine-time defending champion.

The title only enhanced Watson's list of career accomplishments, which began as a player when he debuted with the Houston Astros in 1966.

Watson played for four teams, including the Braves (1982-84), over 19 seasons as a first baseman/outfielder. On Aug. 13, 1983, in the heat of a torrid division race, Watson hit a walkoff, two-run, pinch-hit home run to allow the Braves to beat the Dodgers, 10-9, and send a packed Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium into mayhem.

A two-time All-Star, he finished in the top five in the league in batting three times, knocked in 100 runs or more twice, and walked away from the game with a .295 career average – better than Hall-of-Famers Frank Robinson, Lou Brock and Carl Yastrzemski. The first player to hit for the cycle in both leagues, he accumulated more than 1,800 hits (184 home runs). Perhaps most impressively, he compiled those numbers despite spending 75 percent of his career with the Astros, who played inside the cavernous, pitcher-friendly Astrodome.

Watson reached the World Series only once as a player, but he made the most of the trip. In the 1981 Fall Classic, as a member of the American League champion Yankees, he batted .318 with a pair of home runs and a team-high seven RBIs.

Acquired by the Braves from the Yankees in April 1982, Watson helped Atlanta win the division title that year. He hit .309 as a part-time player in 1983, but a year later, Watson's playing days ended.

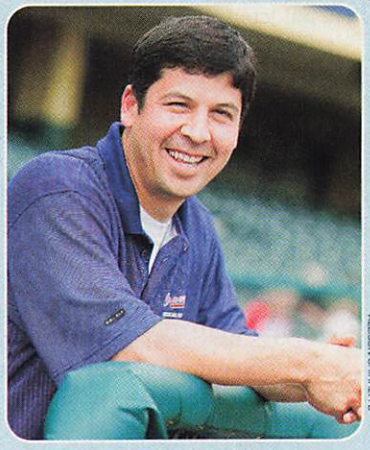
"I went to Oakland, retired and became the big league hitting coach under Tony La Russa," Watson said. "Sandy Alderson was the general manager then, and I remember him asking me, 'What's your goal?' I said, 'To sit in your seat.' He told me he was going to help me, and the rest is history."

He remained in Oakland for two seasons before Houston called him with an offer to become assistant general manager. By 1993, he was at the controls as the Astros' general manager. He was the first African-American to hold that title, though the Braves' Bill Lucas performed the duties of the job in 1976-79 as director and then vice-president of player personnel. Two years later, Watson took the reigns of the sport's most-storied franchise – the Yankees.

In a move that drew heavy criticism, Watson brought Torre in to manage the team in 1996. The Yankees won their first World Series in nearly two decades that fall, roaring back from a 2-0 deficit to beat the Braves in six games. Though Watson resigned in 1997, he watched from afar as New York steamrolled its way to four championships in five years.

HOW I MADE IT TO THE MAJORS

LLOYD VAN PAMELEN
PHYSICAL THERAPIST



ALLISON SHREFFS

BY STEVE FALL

WHEN A BRAVES player suffers a major injury, it's Lloyd van Pamelen's job to help him get back on the field as healthy as possible.

Players may need several months of physical therapy after a major operation, such as Tommy John surgery. An average return from that procedure takes 12 months.

"The elbow needs that gradual stress applied over all these weeks," said van Pamelen. "That's where the art of the rehab comes in. The protocol is designed so that each week and each month there is more and more stress applied to the elbow. Then you see how it responds and reevaluate every day."

Van Pamelen, 41, worked with Mike Gonzalez and Chuck James this off-season. During the season, he works every home game and often joins the team on road trips. He finds his job fascinating, especially helping pitchers recover from elbow and shoulder injuries.

"There is such a fine art to the ability to throw a baseball," said van Pamelen. "How everybody accomplishes that task is amazing, because everybody goes about it differently. Every player has a different set of mechanics. So, you have to learn everything on a protocol basis and in general terms. But then you've got to break it down to how it applies on an individual level to each athlete."

Doctors give van Pamelen a protocol to follow for rehabilitation. Based on the individual athlete, he adapts his approach.

"Especially when you're spending a year with these guys in a rehab mode, you have to know what gets them going," said van Pamelen, who was born in Fayetteville, North Carolina. "You have to know how to mix things up a little bit, yet still stay right on the protocol. So, even though it's a long, drawn-out protocol, you have to keep them interested and engaged the whole time."

Van Pamelen works on all types of baseball injuries, as well as on injuries sustained by athletes in other sports, at Gwinnett SportsRehab in suburban Atlanta. He got his first opportunity to help Braves players in 1995. Dr. Joe Chandler, the team's orthopedist at the time, had an office next door to van Pamelen's clinic.

"He had a lot of baseball rehabbers, not just Braves players," said van Pamelen. "I was already doing a lot of baseball rehab, but not on those guys. So, he said, 'I'd love to send some guys your way if I can.' It's a blessing for me that he gave me a chance to do that."

Van Pamelen continued working on Braves players during the off-season for several years. Four years ago, the club hired him to assist with rehab during the season. Van Pamelen credits John Schuerholz, trainer Jeff Porter and Chandler for that decision at a time when few teams had such positions.

Van Pamelen graduated from Georgia State University in 1988 with a degree in physical therapy. He's worked in sports medicine ever since. He believes physical therapists seeking jobs in baseball need strong communication skills for working with doctors and trainers. More opportunities exist today than in the past for his occupation.

"There are more therapists now that assist the trainers at the major league level than when I started," he said. "But not every team has one helping the trainers."

ALUMNI NOTES

HEROES of HISTORY

The Gainesville (Ga.) Kiwanis Club inducted **Phil Niekro** (RHP, 1964-83, '87) into its service Hall of Fame with the Youth Service Award at their banquet Mar. 18. Niekro was recognized for his support of the Edmondson Telford Center for Children and the Field of Dreams athletic complex for physically challenged children. His charity golf tournament has raised over $650,000. Niekro also received a legislative resolution honoring him for his service to youth presented by State Senator Lee Hawkins and State Representative Carl Rogers.

Niekro will serve as a guest studio analyst on ESPN's Sunday Night Baseball on May 25.

LAT PHOTO/ BRIAN KERSEY

Hank Aaron whoops it up with Mr. Cub on Ernie Banks Day in Chicago.

Hank Aaron (OF, 1954-74) participated in ceremonies at Wrigley Field for the Cubs' opener Mar. 31 when Ernie Banks - Mr. Cub - was honored with the unveiling of a statue in his image.

Aaron was a panelist for MLB's Baseball and the Civil Rights Movement roundtable discussion at the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, on Mar. 28, as part of the activities surrounding the second annual Civil Rights Game. Also in the events at Memphis, **Billy Sample** (OF, 1986) led a Q&A session at a youth summit on Mar. 29.

When the long-suffering Lotte (Korea) Giants won six of their first eight games under new manager **Jerry Royster** (INF/OF, 1976-84, '88), he was celebrated as "Hurricane Royster" with "a magic touch" on the diamond, according to Reuters. Royster is the first non-Korean to manage in the league.

Marquis Grissom (CF, 1995-96) received a Community Service Award from WXIA 11Alive for his work in developing baseball interest among Atlanta youngsters who might not otherwise have the opportunity to play the sport. The non-profit Marquis Grissom Baseball Association held opening day on Mar. 29. Grissom served as an honorary coach with the Braves during the final week of spring training.

Joe Adcock (1B, 1953-62), **Alvin Dark** (SS, 1946, '48-49, '60) and **Connie Ryan** (INF, 1943-44, '46-50, Coach, 1971, '73-74) were named to Louisiana State's All-Alex Box Stadium "Foundation Era" Team, an all-star squad of former LSU players from 1938-83.

The FOX network hired **Leo Mazzone** (Coach, 1985, 1990-2005) as a baseball analyst.

Kent Mercker (LHP, 1989-95, 2003) and **Paul Bako** (C, 2000-01), non-roster players in spring training, made Cincinnati's opening day squad. Mercker, coming back from elbow surgery, hadn't pitched since 2006.

The Reds designated **Mike Stanton** (LHP, 1989-95) for assignment and later released him.

The Oklahoma Sports Museum has obtained for display the pitching rubber from Milwaukee County Stadium that was given to **Warren Spahn** (1942, '46-64) when the stadium was demolished. The museum, which administers the Warren Spahn Award, is raising funds to build a granite "mound" base for the rubber. It also will hold Spahn's picture and stats. Tax-deductible donations made to the Oklahoma Sports Museum can be sent to: OSM, P.O. Box 1342, Guthrie, Okla. 73044.

The Rockies released **Marcus Giles** (2B, 2001-06) from a minor league contract Mar. 26. He was prepared to sign a minor league deal with the Dodgers to play third base at Triple-A Las Vegas for a couple of weeks to show he could do it at the big league level, but backed out before reporting.

Chris Reitsma (RHP, 2004-06) left Mariners camp Mar. 26 when they told him he wasn't making the roster and asked him to continue throwing to recover from two elbow surgeries in the last 20 months.

Rudy Seanez (RHP, 1998-2001) was released by the Dodgers but signed by the Phillies.

The Phillies designated **Wes Helms** (3B, 1998, 2000-02) for assignment and later traded him to Florida for future considerations.

Ray Mileur, publisher of an online site for St. Louis Cardinals coverage, will make the acceptance speech for the late **Billy Southworth** (OF, 1921-23, Manager, 1946-51) at the National Baseball Hall of Fame induction ceremony in Cooperstown on July 29. Southworth led the Cardinals to three pennants and two World Series crowns before the Braves hired him.

Will Cunnane (RHP, 2003-04) signed with the Newark Bears of the independent Atlantic League.

The Yankees released **Chris Woodward** (INF, 2007) at the end of spring training, and the Phillies signed him to a minor league contract.

Pittsburgh sent **Jaret Wright** (RHP, 2003-04) to minor league camp and then released him.

Jose Cabrera (RHP, 2001) signed with the Lancaster (Pa.) Barnstormers of the independent Atlantic League.

Bruce Sutter (RHP, 1985-88) threw out the ceremonial first pitch at the Rome Braves opener April 3.

The Padres released **Robert Fick** (1B, 2003).

The Red Sox assigned **Dan Kolb** (RHP, 2005) to minor league camp.

Craig Wilson (1B, 2007) signed a minor league contract with Pittsburgh.

ChopTalk
THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE ATLANTA BRAVES

SUBSCRIPTIONS
P.O. Box 80750
Conyers, Ga. 30013-8750
PHONE | 1-877-655-CHOP (2467)
WEB | Braves.com/choptalk

PUBLISHER
GARY CARUSO, President
Wonderdog Publishing, Inc.

EDITORIAL
EDITOR: Gary Caruso
COLUMNISTS: Jay Busbee, Skip Caray, Bobby Cox, Ruben Gotay, Brandon Hicks, Patty Rasmussen, Ken Rosenthal (FoxSports.com), Frank Wren
REPORTERS: Bill Ballew, Mark Bowman (MLB.com), Jay Busbee, Jon Cooper, Steve Fall, Brian Knapp, Patty Rasmussen
CHIEF PHOTOGRAPHER: Allison Shirreffs
PHOTOGRAPHERS: Tom Priddy, Patty Rasmussen, Carlos Restrepo, Bill Setliff, Jason Spruill, Walter Victor, Rodger Wood
CARTOONIST: Johnny Sajem

PRODUCTION
ART DIRECTOR: Clark Odom

ADVERTISING
SALES:
Doug Campbell (770) 815-7506
David Haynes (404) 234-7960
FLORIDA SALES
Bill Francisco (727) 733-6970

PRINTER
Publisher's Press

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES
McMillen Communications

NEWSSTAND OPERATIONS
Curtis Circulation Company
Publishers Single Copy Sales Services

BUSINESS OPERATIONS
Rob Calcutta

CHANGE OF ADDRESS
Send address changes or corrections to: ChopTalk, P.O. Box 80750, Conyers, Ga. 30013-8750 or call 1-877-655-CHOP (2467) or visit braves.com/choptalk.

OFFICE OF PUBLICATION
12829 Trinity Dr.
Stafford, TX 77477-4214
PHONE 1-877-655-CHOP (2467)
E-MAIL Letters@ChopTalkonline.com

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY
It is the policy of this magazine and its publisher:
1. To contract with individuals on the basis of their qualifications and with assurance of equal opportunity and treatment,regardless of race, color, creed, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, national origin or handicap.
2. To not knowingly accept any advertisement which implies any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, creed, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, national origin or handicap.

ATLANTA BRAVES STAFF
PUBLIC RELATIONS
BRAD HAINJE - Director of MediaRelations
BETH MARSHALL - Director of Public Relations
ANDY PRESSLEY - Publications Manager
Adam Liberman, Meagan Swingle, Adrienne Midgley

GARY CARUSO

EDITOR & PUBLISHER

TRUE GRACE

TOMMY HOLMES and Pete Rose couldn't have had more differing personalities. Rose is brash and in-your-face. Holmes was gentlemanly and unassuming.

But both could hit, and that's why they were joined in history on July 25, 1978, at Shea Stadium.

As fate would have it, Rose hit in his 38th consecutive game that day to break the modern (post 1900) National League record of 37 set by Holmes in 1945. And Holmes, then director of amateur baseball relations for the Mets, emerged from behind home plate to congratulate the Cincinnati star who wasn't stopped until he reached 44 in a row at Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium.

Holmes (see his photo on page 4) admitted at the time that he got more recognition from Rose breaking his record than he ever did when he set it. Not that the man who was the most popular Brave in the franchise's 82-year stay in Boston ever sought acclaim. In fact, he always said the thing he was most proud of in his career was not the hitting streak, but rather the number of kids he helped keep interested in baseball - and out of trouble - in his job with the Mets.

The Braves lost an incredibly gracious and appreciative member of the franchise Hall of Fame (Class of 2004) April 14 when Holmes passed away at age 91 in Florida. It happened to be Rose's 67th birthday.

"We were truly graced by his presence," said Bob Brady, newsletter editor for the Boston Braves Historical Association (BBHA).

Holmes was a true friend of the BBHA, and vice versa. He regularly attended the organization's annual reunion each October until his health declined recently.

"It was remarkable to see how he still enjoyed interacting with his Boston fans when he returned for reunions," Brady said. "Tommy never turned down an autograph or photo request and was always pleasant, even when mobbed."

In 1945, when he hit in 37 straight games to break the record (33) of Hall of Famer Rogers Hornsby, Holmes had a monster season. The rightfielder led the NL in hits (224), doubles (47), home runs (28) and slugging percentage (.577). His .352 batting average fell three points shy of Phil Cavarretta's league lead, and consequently, he finished second to the Cubs first baseman/outfielder in the MVP voting.

He wasn't runnerup in the hearts of Braves fans, though. They chipped in to buy him a new car!

Holmes' hit total that year remains the modern Braves record, as does his hitting streak. His doubles record wasn't broken until Marcus Giles did it in 2003.

One Braves record, also set in 1945, that Holmes will hold forever is fewest strikeouts in a season. Playing in all 154 games, he struck out just nine times and became the only man to lead the league in home runs and fewest strikeouts in the same season.

From 1944 to '48, Holmes strung together five straight seasons of hitting .309 or better, and he retired in 1952 with a career average of .302. He was a two-time NL All-Star, including 1948 when he hit .325 and helped lead the Braves to the pennant.

The right-field bleachers at Braves Field were known as the Jury Box. When Holmes trotted onto the field for the start of a game, the fans in the Jury Box observed complete silence. As he reached his position, they would cheer wildly, and he would raise both arms and wave. The fans then would yell, "How many hits today, Tommy?" and he'd hold up one to five fingers.

In 1946, the Braves obtained Johnny Barrett to play right and planned to move Holmes to left. The first time they took the field that way, the Jury Box taunted Barrett so brutally the entire game that he told manager Billy Southworth he refused to play right field again. Southworth, recently voted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame, immediately returned Holmes to right field for the rest of the season.

That's popularity.

THIS ISSUE OF CHOPTALK was mailed April 22. The June issue will be mailed May 22.

BEYOND BASEBALL

BY **PATTY RASMUSSEN**

Mark Teixeira, toasting a fund raising effort at the high school he attended in Baltimore, lends his support to a new cause this summer.

JOHN PEIGHTEL

TEE FOR TEX

THE MARK TEIXEIRA Charitable Foundation will host the 2008 Prevent Child Abuse (PCA) Georgia Celebrity Golf Classic on June 30 at White Columns Country Club in Alpharetta, Ga. Teixeira and his wife, **Leigh**, created the foundation in 2006 to raise money for a variety of youth organizations, including establishing college scholarships for high school seniors. Proceeds from the tournament and silent auction will benefit PCA Georgia. Other Braves players and local sports celebrities are expected to participate. Individual spots were still available at press time for $750 per golfer. For more information, check pcageorgia.org or call (404) 870-6589. Teixeira is also the honorary chairman of a $10 million capital campaign underway at Mount Saint Joseph High School, his alma mater, in Baltimore. He gave $1 million to the effort and is featured in the campaign video. The funds are going toward expansion and improvement of athletic facilities on the school's campus.

Prevent Child Abuse Georgia Celebrity Golf Classic

Hosted by the Mark Teixeira Charitable Foundation

THE BRAVES' FAMILY SECTION at Turner Field was packed on Opening Night. Spotted in the stands that evening were **Jeff Francoeur**'s wife, **Catie**, his father **David**, along with **Matt Diaz**'s wife, **Leslee**, holding the couple's infant daughter, **Anna**. The Diaz's son **Nathan**, 16 months old, was in Florida with his grandparents. **Kim Hudson**, hosted a young woman enjoying a Make-A-Wish visit during batting practice, and then remained for the game. **Kelly Johnson**'s wife, **Lauren**, was in the stands, as were **Ashley McCann**, wife of **Brian**, and Brian's parents, **Howie** and **Sherry McCann**, and brother, **Brad**, formerly with the Kansas City Royals organization. **Blaine Boyer**'s wife, **Ginsey**, was in attendance, as were **Terri Wren**, wife of general manager **Frank Wren**, and the couple's three sons, **Kyle**, **Colby** and **Jordan**. **Chris Glavine** watched her husband, **Tom**, pitch the opening night game and was accompanied by Tom's daughter, **Amber**, and their sons, **Peyton** and **Mason**...

ALLISON SHIRREFFS

Chris (L-R), Amber, Peyton and Mason Glavine head the Tom Glavine cheering section on Opening Night at Turner Field.

Jeff Francoeur will blog throughout the season on the Delta Airlines website. There's no telling when Francoeur will post, so occasionally check it out at delta.blogs.com, then click the link for "Sponsorships." The Delta blog also includes a link to Francoeur's "official" website, found at jefffrancoeur.com. Francoeur recently blogged from the first "real" road trip of the year, April 7-17. He's written about the joys of spring training at Disney, his excitement about the season opener in Washington D.C., and about that frightening game on Mar. 18 when he was hit in the jaw by a pitch. Francoeur promises in his blog to take "you on a journey through the 2008 season, posting from my travels with the team this summer as we criss-cross the country playing for the NL East title. Throughout the year, I'll be updating you on my travels across the country, including my favorite restaurants, hotels and trips from Delta's network..."

Tom and **Chris Glavine** barely had time to unpack and settle into their new home in Alpharetta, when they opened their doors Mar. 28, for a Wine Tasting and Silent Auction to benefit Queen of Angels Catholic School. Approximately 120 attendees mingled on the terrace and pool area, sampling wines from Arcadian Winery and Silver Oak Cellars. Wines included a Silver Oak

Cabernet and Twomey Merlot and an Arcadian Chardonnay and Pinot Noir. Guests also enjoyed an assortment of appetizers catered by Fancy Pantry of Alpharetta. Through a combination of ticket sales and silent auction items, the event raised over $34,000 to fund a special initiative that includes a scholarship program, teacher incentive programs, and curriculum enhancements at Queen of Angels Catholic School, where one of the Glavines' four children is a student...

Danny Lockhart, 15, a high school freshman, and his teammates on the Hebron Christian School baseball team, get the benefit of coaching from a former major leaguer. Danny is the son of **Keith Lockhart**, an infielder with the Braves from 1997 to 2002. Lockhart played one more season, in 2003 for San Diego, before retiring. The Lockharts, wife **Lisa**, and their children, **Danny**, daughter, **Sydney**, 13, and son **Jason**, 6, remained in the Atlanta area following his retirement, living in Gwinnett County.

"I'm called a 'lay' coach," said Lockhart, who had to take a principles of coaching class, a rules course, and a CPR course in order to qualify for the volunteer position. "It has been a lot of fun," he said. "Danny's doing great. For a freshman, he's adjusted well."

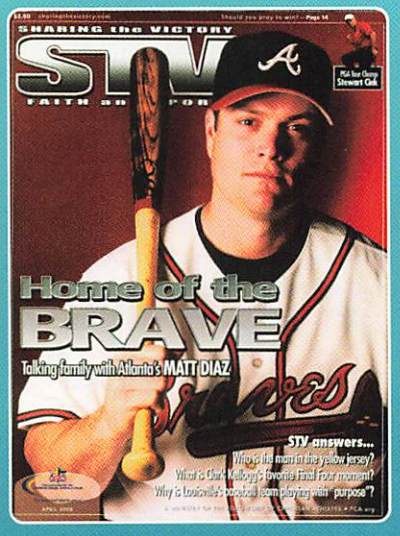
In addition to his coaching duties, Lockhart is involved in an engineering/development company for commercial and residential site development. "I'm learning the business of developing, which requires meeting with commissioners, getting bids from contractors and then making sure things are run smooth," he said. Lockhart stays in touch with a number of his baseball friends, including **John Smoltz**, **Ryan Klesko**, **Darren Holmes** and **Walt Weiss**...

Ginsey (Blaine) Boyer and **Lauren (Kelly) Johnson** joined their husbands in Colorado during the early April series. Ginsey celebrated her birthday, April 9, while in Colorado...

Kim Hudson took two early season trips to Washington D.C., first flying on the team charter for the Opening Night festivities at Nationals Park on Mar. 30. On April 10, Kim and eldest daughter, **Kennedie**, flew to Washington to tour the city and see the weekend games at Nationals Park. Kim's parents, **Harold** and **Debbie Bruner**, joined the Hudsons for the weekend in Washington...

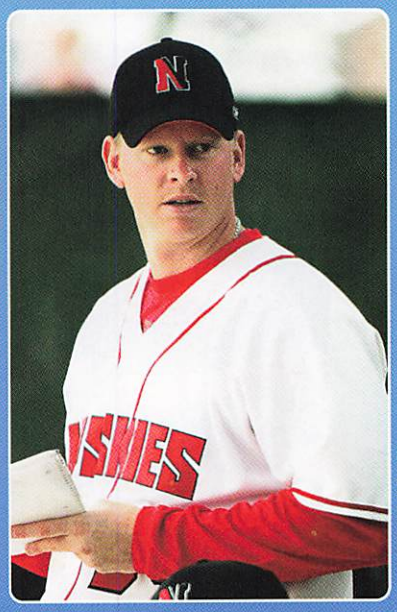
Former long-time Braves trainer **Dave Pursley** will be inducted into the National Athletic Trainers Association (NATA) Hall of Fame June 19 during the organization's annual convention in St. Louis. "It's the highest honor I know of for athletic trainers," said Pursley, who retired as head trainer at the end of the 2002 season after a 52-year career in the Braves organization, 42 years at the major league level. The NATA is made up of trainers from all sports, both collegiate and professional. A film crew visited Turner Field in late April to interview **Bobby Cox**, trainer **Jeff Porter**, and an assortment of players and personnel for the introductory video that will be shown at the induction ceremony...

Recently traded relief pitcher, **Tyler Yates**, now with the Pittsburgh Pirates, and his wife, **Liezel**, are expecting their first child in early September.



COVER BOY

MATT DIAZ graces the cover of the April issue of Sharing The Victory, a sports publication of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). He and his younger brother, **Jonny**, are the subjects of the cover feature that details the brothers' involvement with baseball, Matt's pro career, and Jonny's burgeoning music career. The story can be seen online at sharingthevictory.com. Jonny and his wife, **Libby**, attended the final game of the Braves-Mets series April 6 at Turner Field.



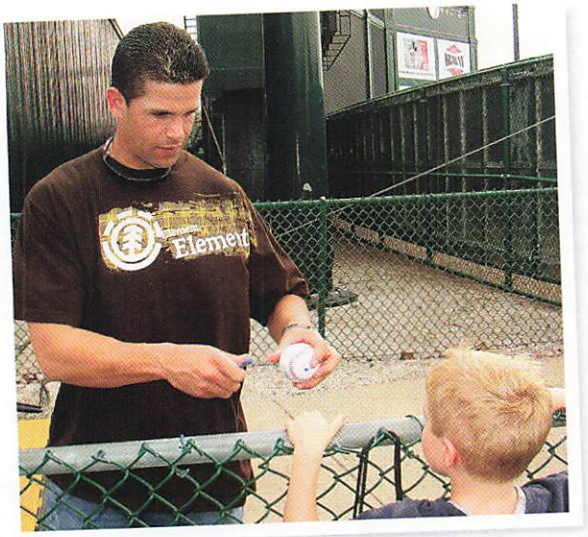
BROTHERS IN BALL

THAT BASEBALL thing runs in the Glavine family. **Mike Glavine** (above), brother of **Tom**, currently serves as assistant baseball coach at North-eastern University in Boston, Mass. Mike, who played for four years at Northeastern and was one of the most-prolific hitters in the school's history, works primarily with the team's infielders and hitters. Drafted by the Cleveland Indians in 1995, Mike played 10 seasons of pro ball as a first baseman/outfielder, mostly at the Double-A and Triple-A levels (including 1999-2001 in the Braves' farm system). The Mets called him up to the majors in September 2003, giving him the opportunity to play on the same team as Tom, then he retired from pro ball in 2004. "I think it's really cool," said Tom, who hasn't been asked to give any clinics - yet! "He's really enjoying it and would love to be a head coach some day." Northeastern played Georgia State University in Atlanta the weekend of Mar. 28-30, but the Braves' schedule conflicted, so Tom wasn't able to attend the games.

TALKIN' CHOP

LETTERS & PHOTOS FROM OUR READERS

WHETHER YOU'RE HAVING FUN AT TURNER FIELD, EXPERIENCING A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH YOUR FAVORITE BRAVES PLAYER, OR JUST SHOWING OFF YOUR COLLECTION OF BRAVES STUFF OR TRYING ON YOUR NEW BRAVES SHIRT, WE WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT AND SEE A PICTURE.



ULTIMATE VACATION

After visiting Turner Field for the first time in 2006, my husband started planning our 2007 vacation. He has been an Atlanta Braves fan-atic for years, dedicating our entire family room to autographed jerseys, baseballs, signed photos and even the official Atlanta Braves red and blue paint colors. We spent nine days on the road, four of those in Atlanta watching the Braves take on the Cubs, and we even caught a couple of Rome and Mississippi Braves games. This picture was taken on my husbands 41st birthday, which fell on one of the days we spent at Turner Field. It was a great vacation and one we both think we'll plan again! We look forward to our monthly ChopTalk - keep up the great work!

PENNY AND TROY FRAZIER

Kokomo, Ind.

THE LOVE OF THE GAME

My son Shannon couldn't wait to go on our yearly spring training trip. It was hard for me to pull him out of the stadium after the game, especially when he got to meet Javy Lopez. Javy took the time to say some kind words and sign his baseball. Our thanks to Javy for taking the time to make a true young fan love the game even more. Also, thanks to y'all for making ChopTalk the favorite magazine in this house.

THE WIECZOREK FAMILY

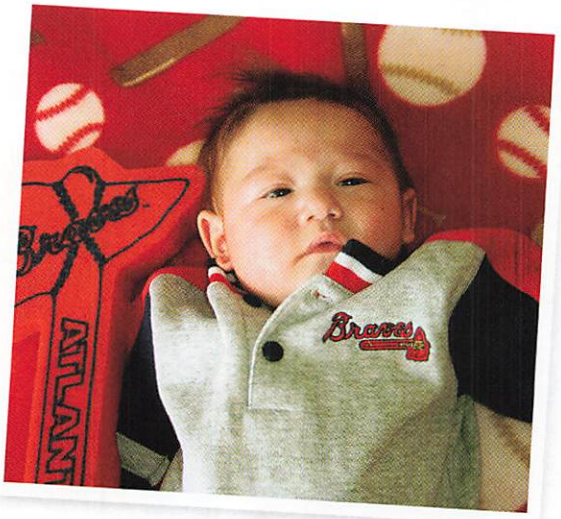
Savannah, Ga.

A CHIP OFF THE OLD...

This is a picture of our first child, who was born last Nov. 16. We named him Matthew Chipper Mai. Obviously, his middle name is for my favorite player. I couldn't get my wife to use Chipper as his first name. He spent the first two months of his life in neonatal intensive care with a birth defect, but had surgery and is now home. Several times a month, he travels back and forth to the hospital for therapy, and the outlook is positive. During his two-month hospital stay, his nurses and even the doctors kept calling him Chipper instead of Matthew. As young as he is, he is a fighter like the real Chipper. Hopefully, when the Braves are in Chicago this June, we can take him to Wrigley to see the Braves battle the Cubs.

PAUL MAI

Oswego, Ill.

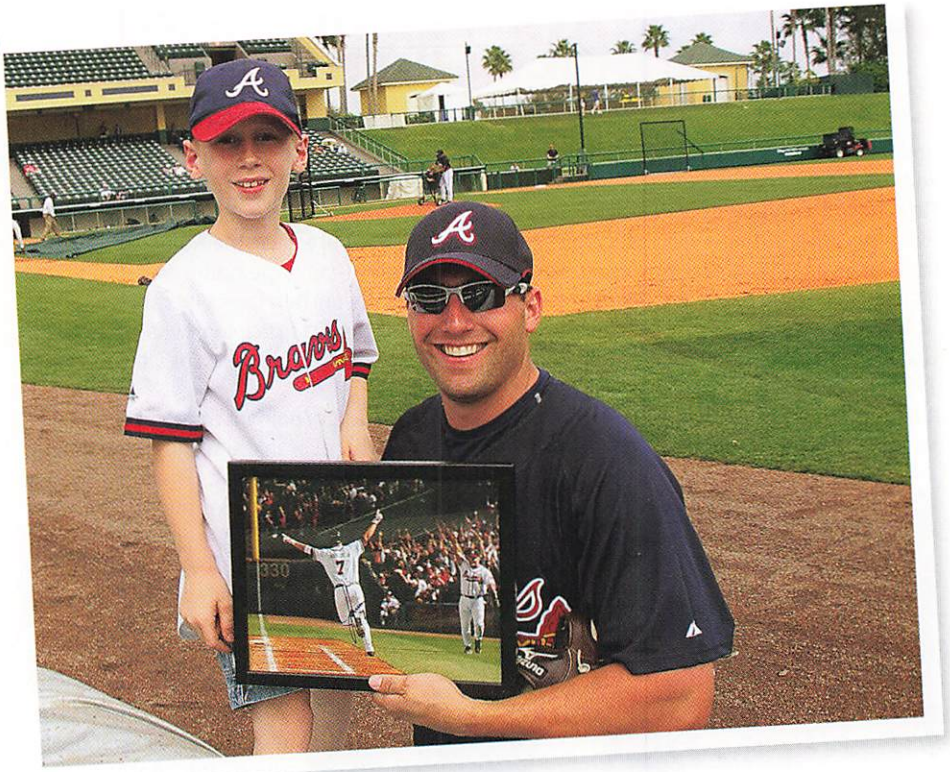


CHOPTALK AND THE ATLANTA BRAVES SUPPORT OUR TROOPS

CLEARING THE BASES

While attending FanFest this year, my son had Jeff Francoeur autograph a photo of him rounding first base on the night he hit a grand slam a couple of years ago. Jeff really liked the photo and asked where I got it and said he'd like to get one. I wasn't able to find another one, so we went to Orlando during spring training to give it to Jeff. He was very gracious and let us take some really nice pictures.

WILLIAM FLOYD
Kingsland, Ga.



FAMILY TIES

Our family is celebrating its fourth-generation Braves fan, Victoria Waters! My grandmother lived in a house about one mile from old Parker Field in Richmond, and my dad took us to a lot of games during the '70s & '80s. He took us to Atlanta for the first time in 1983. It was the last day of the season and Murphy stole his 30th base to make the 30/30 club, and it was against the Dodgers! For my dad's 70th birthday this year, my brother and I took him to Cleveland for the interleague games. Now I am looking forward to taking my daughter to Atlanta for her first Braves game!

CRAIG WATERS
Huntersville, NC

SHARE YOUR BRAVES FEVER!

WRITE TO US

Talkin' Chop c/o ChopTalk
P.O. Box 80750
Conyers, Ga. 30013-8750

Letters@ChopTalkonline.com

Letters and photos chosen for publication are subject to editing, and photos cannot be returned. Computer printouts of photos cannot be published. High-resolution files preferred. ChopTalk reserves the right to use letters and photos for promotional and advertising purposes.

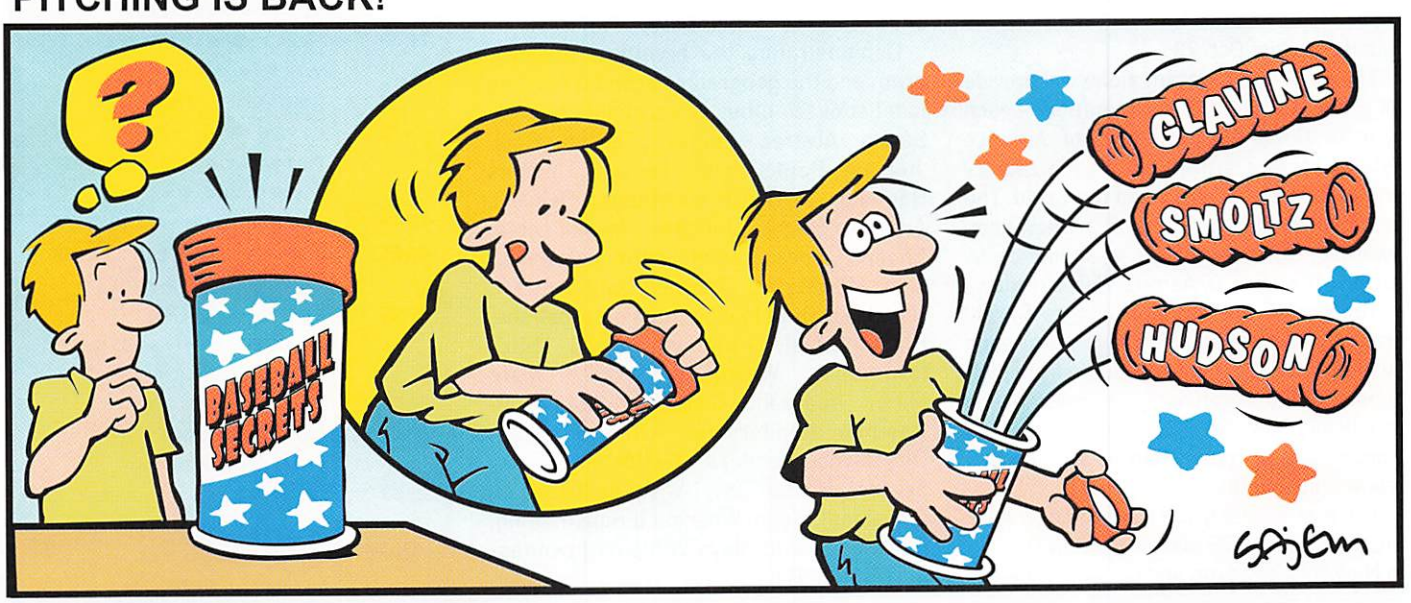
WRITE THE BRAVES

Atlanta Braves
P.O. Box 4064
Atlanta, Ga. 30302

For the Braves players, Bobby Cox, the coaches, broadcasters, or members of the front office.

If you request a response, be sure to include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Never send anything of value that you want returned. This is no guarantee of a reply.

PITCHING IS BACK!



AARON'S STATS: 755 HOME RUNS, INNUMERABLE LIVES TOUCHED

THE INCREDIBLE impact Hank Aaron had on baseball history is indisputable and will be imbedded in our culture forever. However, the influence he's having on the lives of others likely will surpass that impact, even though, relatively speaking, it's only in the formative stages.

That's because Aaron's Chasing The Dream Foundation (HACDF), founded in 1994, is helping more youths than ever pursue and achieve goals in a wide variety of fields. These individuals and those who follow them will be helping to shape society forever, thanks to the perpetual endowment Major League Baseball made to the foundation last Oct. 28.

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS OF AMERICA

Hank and Billye Aaron (L) present a grant to aspiring singing talent Jocelyn Quiroz as Boys and Girls Clubs chairman Rick Goings and president/CEO Roxanne Spillett look on.

The new MLB program alone will provide 44 grants - Aaron's uniform number - each year to Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) members from across the country and at military bases around the world. The first 15 of these scholarships have now been awarded, and the goal is to announce 44 recipients by Feb. 5, Aaron's 75th birthday.

The grants are for as much as $2,500 annually and are eligible for renewal each year until the recipients graduate from high school. Children can apply for assistance in practically any field or interest ranging from sports to music, dance, art, science, leadership and literature.

The first $2,500 grant from the new MLB program of HACDF was presented Dec. 11 in New York by Aaron and his wife, Billye, to 12-year-old Jocelyn Quiroz, a gifted singer. She was asked to sing at the Boys & Girls Clubs Board of Governors dinner but had no idea what would follow her performance of "Somewhere Over the Rainbow."

"Jocelyn has a beautiful voice, and the expression on her face when she learned she was the first recipient was very touching," said Cyndi Court, senior vice president of BGCA.

"It was a very poinant moment, and it was wonderful that Hank and Billye were there to see it. They're very passionate about this and very generous with their time. They are incredible advocates for youths nationwide and are inspiring hundreds to do things they wouldn't otherwise have the opportunity to do. It is such a wonderful thing the Aarons have thought of to inspire children to pursue their dreams."

Jocelyn, who is one of six girls in a family led by a single mother, hopes to be able to sing the Star Spangled Banner at Yankee Stadium, and Court says BGCA hopes to help her achieve that goal soon.

Recipients must have strong academic credentials, as well as exhibited innate talent and desire in their fields of interest.

Demonstrating the breath of the program and the geographic scope it reaches is a list of the other 14 recipients to date: Sasha Alvarez (dance, Tampa Bay), Juwuan Banks (golf, Detroit), Moises Banuelos (acting/presentation, Denver), Andrew Shane Johnson (music/viola, Phoenix), Lorainz Johnson (music/percussion, Milwaukee), Thornell Johnson (art, Houston), Elliot Mason (music/saxophone, Philadelphia), Timothy "Jared" Miller (swimming, Washington, D.C.), Marc Miller (football, Cleveland), Maia M. Ogembo (leadership, Arlington, Va.), Deshawna Sanders (performing arts, Seattle), Hector "Javy" Vasquez (baseball, Cleveland), Helen Wharton (English riding, Cincinnati), and Maya Williams (gymnastics, Tampa Bay).

BIRTHDAYS

MAY

1ST	CHARLIE O'BRIEN (48)
	ARMANDO REYNOSO (42)
	MANNY ACOSTA (27)
2ND	CLAY CARROLL (67)
	JARROD SALTALAMACCHIA (23)
	JOSE ASCANIO (23)
3RD	CHRIS CANNIZZARO (70)
	GABE MOLINA (33)
4TH	BERT THIEL (82)
	KEN OBERKFELL (52)
	EDDIE PEREZ (40)
	JOE BOROWSKI (37)
6TH	DICK COLE (82)
7TH	CLAUDE RAYMOND (71)
9TH	TONY BARTIROME (76)
10TH	MERRITT RANEW (70)
11TH	MILT PAPPAS (69)
	TRENIDAD HUBBARD (42)
	KERRY LIGTENBERG (37)
12TH	FELIPE ALOU (73)
	JOE NOLAN (57)
	WES HELMS (32)
14TH	DENNIS MARTINEZ (53)
15TH	**JOHN SMOLTZ** (41)
	CLINT SAMMONS (25)
16TH	BOB BRUCE (75)
17TH	BILLY HOEFT (76)
	PASCUAL PEREZ (51)
	JOHN FOSTER (30)
18TH	MARCUS GILES (30)
19TH	AL SANTORINI (60)
	RICK CERONE (54)
21ST	EARL HERSH (76)
	BOBBY COX (67)
	PAUL RUNGE (50)
	TOM MARTIN (38)
22ND	RON PICHE (73)
	WALT HRINIAK (65)
	MIKE EDEN (59)
23RD	CLYDE KING (84)
	RAMON CARABALLO (39)
	MIKE GONZALEZ (30)
24TH	DANNY BAUTISTA (36)
25TH	JOHN MONTEFUSCO (58)
	FERNANDO LUNAR (31)
26TH	EDDIE HAAS (73)
	DARRELL EVANS (61)
	RANDALL SIMON (33)
27TH	JIM VATCHER (42)
28TH	ED OLWINE (50)
	DUANE WARD (44)
29TH	ROBERTO VARGAS (79)
	BLUE MOON ODOM (63)
31ST	LARRY OWEN (53)
	KENNY LOFTON (41)

ORDER TODAY! 1-800-433-BRAVES

CALL MON-FRI
8:30 AM-6:00 PM

WE'VE OUTFITTED THE BRAVES. WE CAN DO THE SAME FOR ~~YOU.~~ Lady Braves

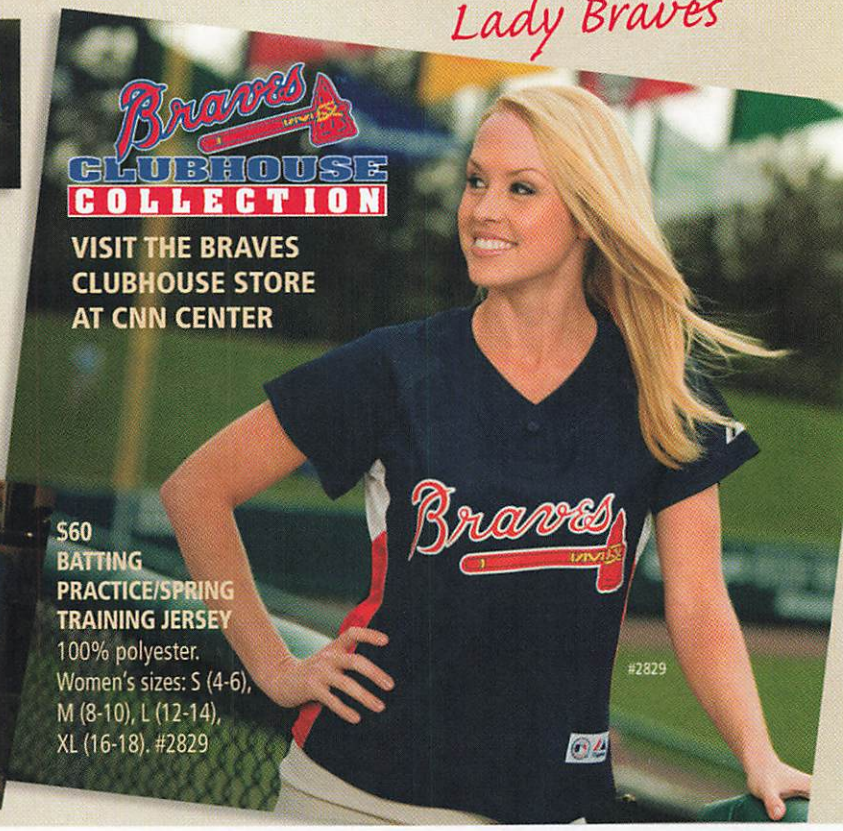
Purchase your Lady Braves Merchandise along with Braves t-shirts, jerseys, jackets, caps and more for every Braves fan. Call the Braves Catalog at 1-800-433-BRAVES, or visit the Braves Clubhouse Store at CNN Center.

$20 1966 SKINNY TEE
100% cotton. Junior sizes: S, M, L, XL, XXL. #3088

$22 PLAYER NAME-NUMBER TEE
100% cotton.
Women's sizes: XS, S, M, L.
#1192 C. Jones, #1196 Francoeur

$18 MOSS GARMENT WASHED
Adjustable. #509

$20 FLOWER SKINNY TEE
100% cotton. Junior sizes: S, M, L, XL. #4494

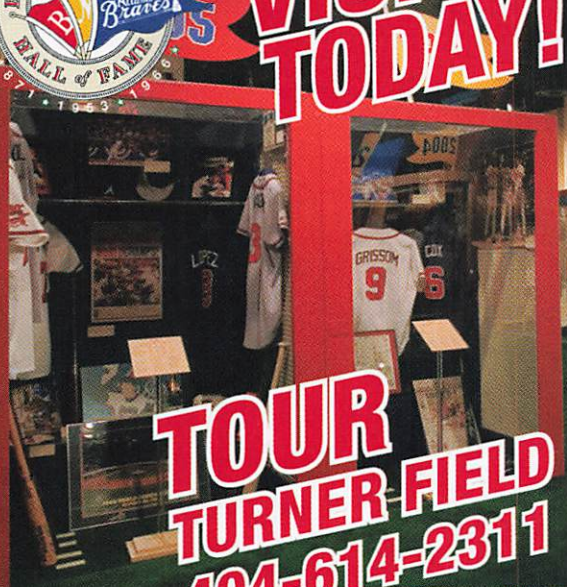


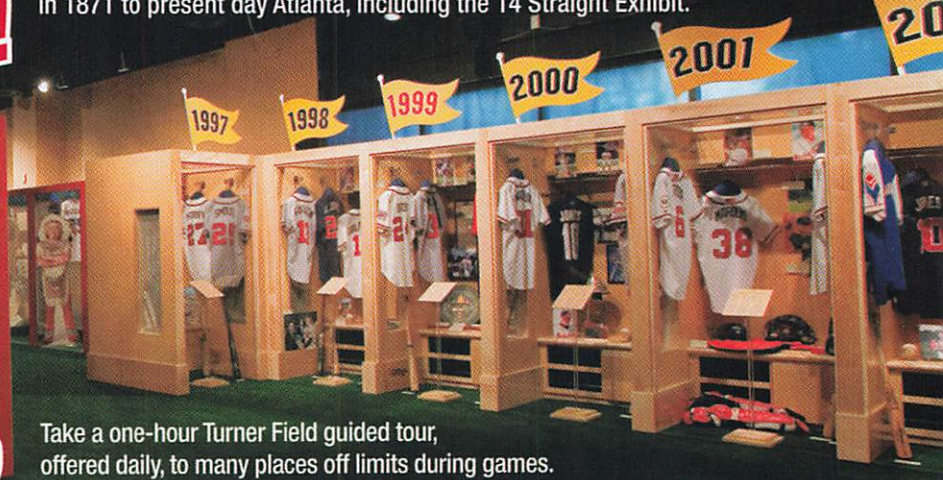
$60 BATTING PRACTICE/SPRING TRAINING JERSEY
100% polyester.
Women's sizes: S (4-6), M (8-10), L (12-14), XL (16-18). #2829

THE IVAN ALLEN JR. BRAVES MUSEUM HALL of FAME
1871 1963 1966

VISIT TODAY!

Visit the Braves Museum at AISLE 134 and view more than 600 Braves artifacts and photographs. See items from the team's beginning in Boston in 1871 to present day Atlanta, including the 14 Straight Exhibit.

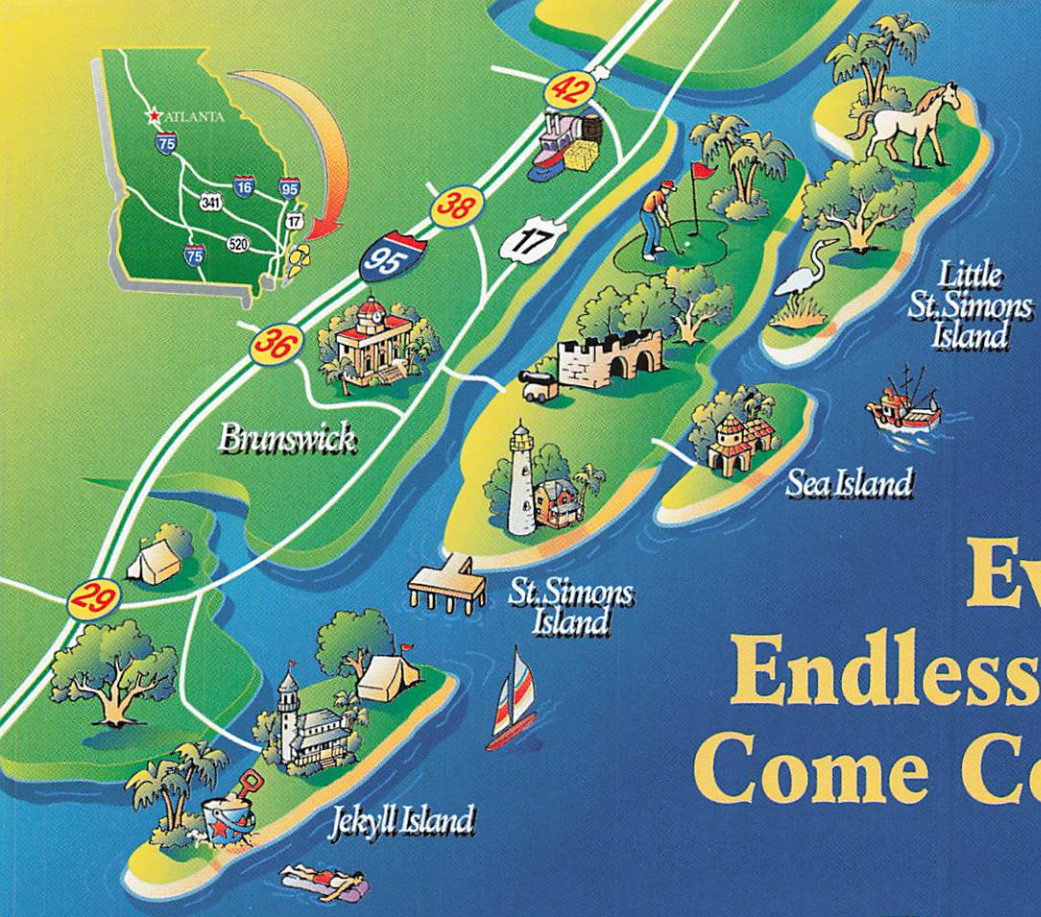




TOUR TURNER FIELD 404-614-2311

Take a one-hour Turner Field guided tour, offered daily, to many places off limits during games. Group and school tours are offered year-round, including specialized tours on the subjects of math, social studies, art and careers in sports. Call 404-614-2311.

HOME OF THE BRAVES
TURNER FIELD



Every Season, Endless Reasons To Come Coast Awhile, Atlanta!

Brunswick & The Golden Isles of Georgia. Unhurried. Unspoiled. Unmatched for countless diversions and pleasures. Vast marshlands, winding rivers, and ribbon-smooth beaches. Centuries-old oaks draped in moss. The stunning beauty of this corner of Georgia is legendary.

History is alive here. The flags of five nations have fluttered in these salt breezes marking a diverse heritage that lingers today. An English fort, antebellum plantation ruins, Victorian homes–400 years of history. And getting better with age.

Recreation for every taste and tempo. Miles of fairways fronting 216 holes of golf, acres of tennis courts. Plus casino/cruise ship, sport fishing, boating, sailing and endless bike paths offering discoveries around every bend.

Mainland Brunswick greets with quaint charm. The architecture of Old Town, fleets of shrimp boats along its waterfront, antique shops. And so much more.

Cross the fabled Marshes of Glynn and behold The Golden Isles. St. Simons Island, Sea Island, Little St. Simons Island and Jekyll Island. Beaches so perfect for swimming, strolling, shelling, sunning. A mecca for shoppers, pure paradise for golf and tennis lovers. Historic sites by the dozens, fresh seafood by the pound. And accommodations of every description from budget to luxury to camping and rental cottages.

Where I-95 bends toward the sea, pull off and coast awhile. The hospitality, like the climate, welcomes year-round. Brunswick & The Golden Isles. Enjoy them each. Explore them all.

For a free vacation planning guide: 1-800-933-COAST (2627)

BRUNSWICK AND THE GOLDEN ISLES OF GEORGIA

ST. SIMONS ISLAND • SEA ISLAND
LITTLE ST. SIMONS ISLAND • JEKYLL ISLAND

BGICVB.COM